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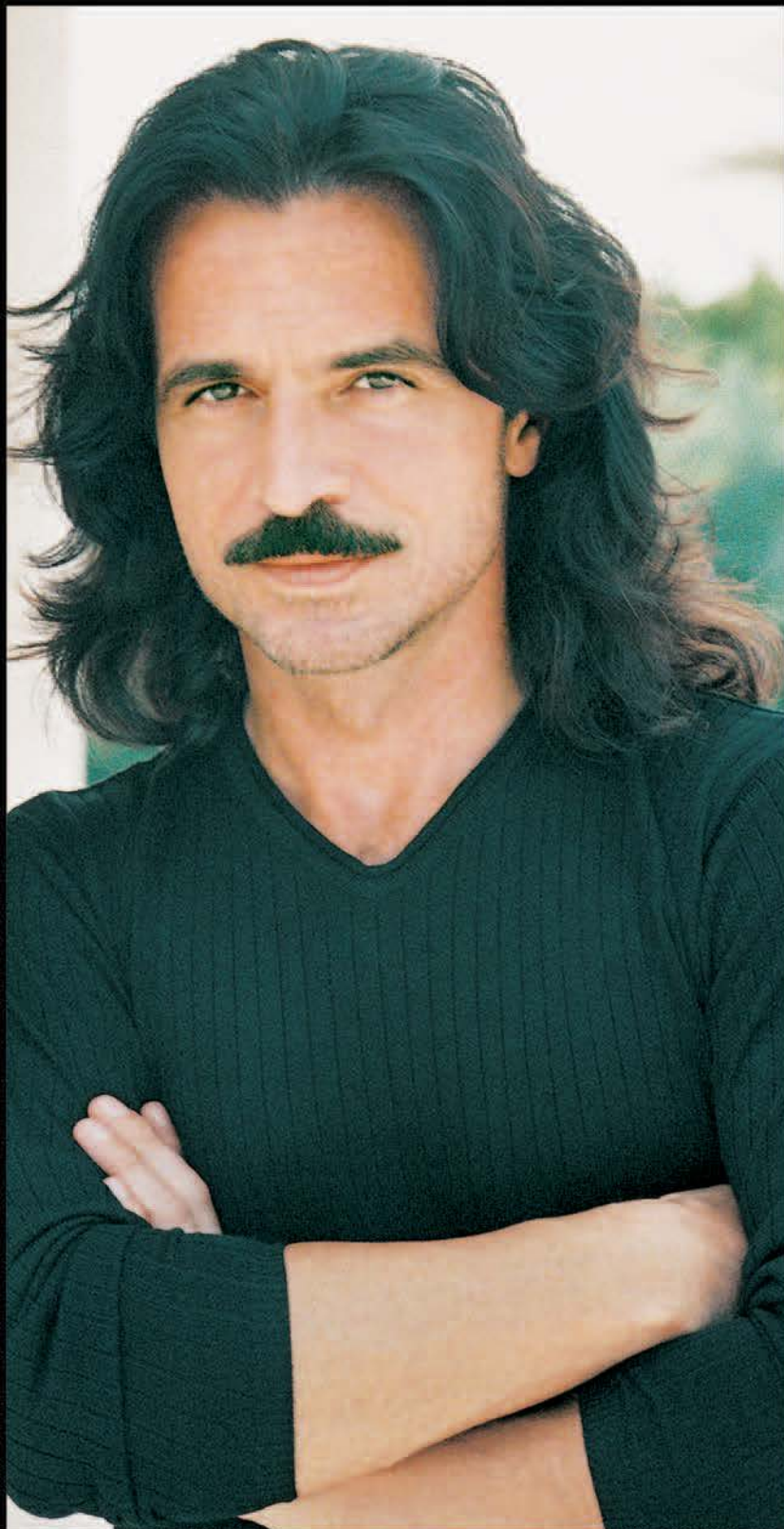
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Newsbites www.commonground.ca

Parade of Lost Souls Oct. 30

One of the most popular free events in Vancouver, the Parade of Lost Souls, is expected to attract thousands of people to the Commercial Drive area at the end of this month.

The 13th annual parade, being held Saturday, October 30, will honour the dead, wake the living, bring up our fears and celebrate life.

Enjoy a scary night of fun for families, spirits and spooks of all ages. This unearthly procession guides you through the streets and alleys of the Grandview Neighbourhood.

Amazing displays of community involvement take place as residents decorate their houses, play haunting Halloween music and even act out ghoulish plays for the many hundreds of passers-by. The parade is led by ghostly orchestras and culminates in a grand fire finale. Dress up and bring noisemakers.

The events start at Grandview Park at 6 pm, with the procession at 7, finale fire-show at 8:45 and fireworks at 9 pm.

Volunteers are still needed for shrine building, production and security. Contact Heidi at 604-862-4130 or the Public Dreams Society www.publicdreams.org 604-879-8611.

At-large vs. wards plebiscite

The plebiscite is October 16, 8 am to 8 pm. Advance voting October 6 and 12, 8 am to 8 pm at Vancouver City Hall. It's your city. You pick. www.pickone.ca 604-873-7681

Greek sailor imprisoned for refusing to go to Iraq

On September 13, seaman apprentice Giorgos Monastiriotis, member of the crew of the battleship Navarin was court martialled and sentenced to 40 months imprisonment for his refusal to follow the ship to his mission in the Persian Gulf

during the war on Iraq. www.duckdaotsu.org/092404-war-resister.html

Mideast nukes

Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli nuclear weapon whistleblower, is promoting a proposal that "there be a trade-off between the Iranian nuclear program and the ending of the Israeli one." www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=04/08/18/136217 For more on Israel's nuclear arsenal www.msnbc.com/news/wld/graphics/strategic_israel_dw.htm. Vanunu has just been awarded a \$50,000 peace grant by Yoko Ono.

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OUR COVER by Geoff Olson

"Is the universe friendly?" Einstein said it's the
most important question any human being
can ask. So as a graphic artist, how do you
illustrate such a question? One approach is
to play with one of the most annoying visual
icons ever invented, the happy face. I liked
the idea of combining the mundane with the
metaphysical, since the universe itself does
that sort of thing. Besides, the story is a think-
piece; putting something a little more playful
on the cover this time around appealed to all
of us at Common Ground. I'm not sure we've
actually reclaimed the happy face, but I think
we succeeded in putting a cosmic spin on it.

ISSUE 159 OCTOBER 2004

IN THIS ISSUE

CULTURE

- Take back your time – Anders Hayden 6
- Is the universe friendly? – Geoff Olson 7
- Jane Jacobs's Dark Age Ahead – Geoff Olson 10
- US election fraud – Bo Filter 11
- Fair voting in BC – Paul George 11
- Escape the pace – Lisa Rickwood 12
- The road less travelled Ethics in Action – M. Cureton 13
- Scared Sacred – John William 14
- Film festival and beyond – Robert Alstead 15
- What the bleep do we know? 15
- FOCCED: US Mideast policy 15

HEALTH & FITNESS

- The genetic game – Marya Skrypiczajko 28

- Food allergy survival – Vesanto Melina 29
- Tippy canoe – Kareen Zebroff 36
- SPIRITUALITY
- The end of suffering – Eckhart Tolle 17
- Human perspective evolving – Gwen Randall-Young 27
- ENVIRONMENT
- Truth struggles under W's thumb – David Suzuki 16
- Where are we going? – Guy Dauncey 17
- RESOURCE DIRECTORY 20
- NEWSBITES 4
- DATEBOOK 31
- CLASSIFIEDS 30
- ZODIAC 30

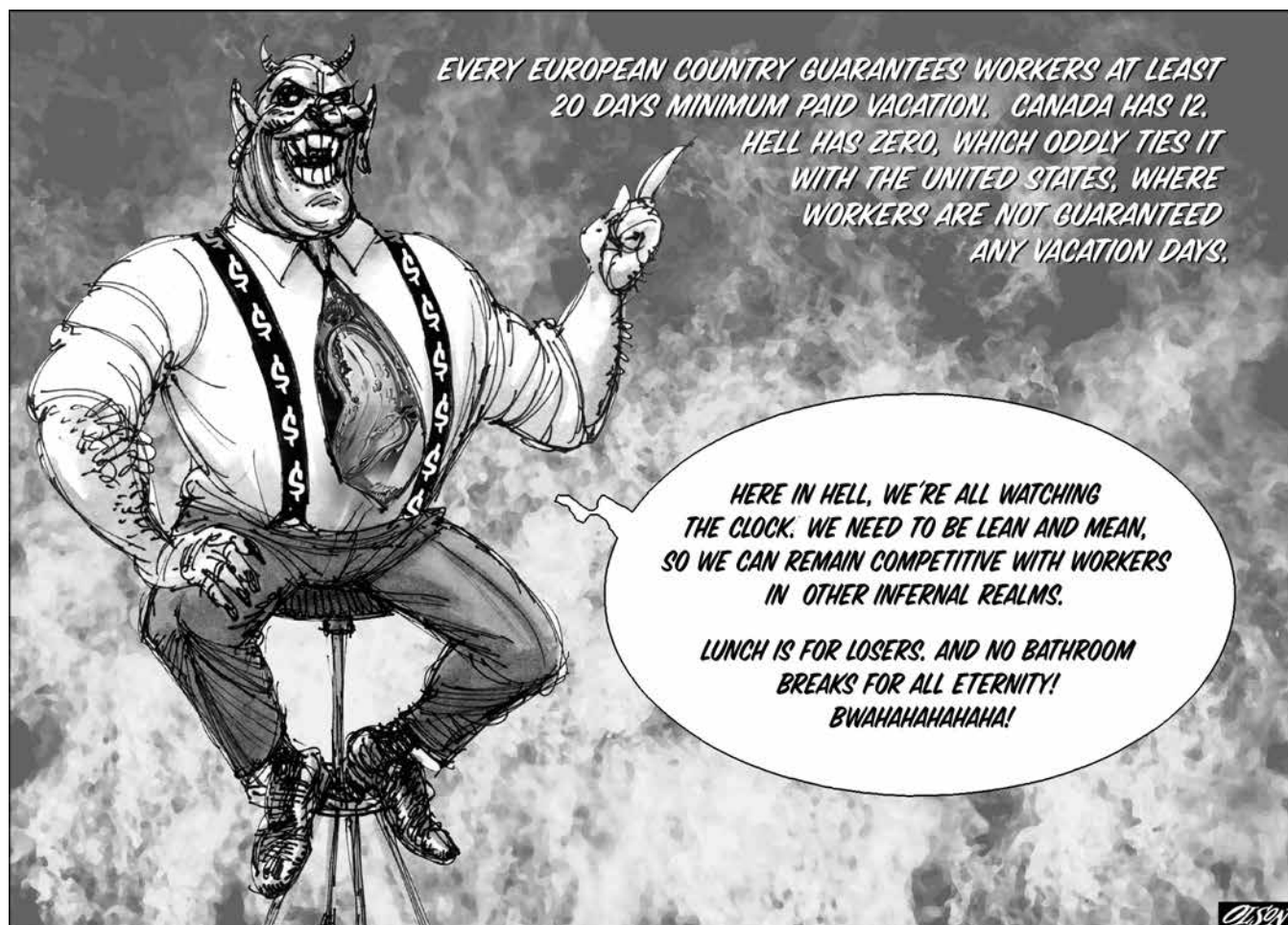
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H.A.N.S.



Europe's work-time alternatives

by Anders Hayden

One of the top challenges facing most of us in today's fast paced modern world is that there is so much to do and seemingly so little time to do it in.

This article looks at how we can heal what has become a dysfunctional relationship with time. This apparent lack of time causes stress, anxiety and disease.

It's late October. You've been working hard all year and feel like you're ready for some time off. How about taking the rest of the year? If you've been working as much as the average American employee, you've already clocked as many hours as a full-time worker does over an entire year in many European countries.

Of course, Europeans don't just stop work nine to ten weeks before the New Year. Instead, European nations have introduced a wide range of shorter work-time policies. Their goals, which vary in importance in each country, include: improving the quality of life for working people, promoting work-family balance and gender equity, creating opportunities for skills-upgrading and lifelong learning, and reducing unemployment by better distributing the available jobs.

While Western Europe is not a worker's paradise, its various shorter work-time policies are valuable examples of ways that public policies can foster "time affluence" alongside material affluence.

International Work-time Gap

One of the first products of the industrial revolution was a dramatic increase in work hours for most people, with 13- and 14-hour days, 70- or 80-hour weeks, or more, common in many countries in the nineteenth century. In response, working people embarked on a difficult struggle for work-time reduction, which, over time, has delivered achievements such as the eight-hour day, the two-day weekend, and paid vacations.

The United States was once an international work-time reduction leader. Henry Ford's auto plants introduced a 40-hour week in 1926, while German autoworkers had to wait until 1967 for a similar standard. In the 1930s, the U.S. and France were among the first countries to legislate a 40-hour week, and Congress seriously considered a 30-hour bill. By contrast, Saturday was a regular working day in the Netherlands until the 1960s. Sweden did not reach a 40-hour standard until 1973.

After World War II, the American shorter work-time movement ground to a halt, while many European nations caught up with and surpassed American standards. From 1979 to 2000, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Norway benefited from work-time reductions of nearly 10 percent or more. Work hours have also fallen dramatically in South Korea and Japan, which now has a lower

annual estimate than the United States.

Workweek Below 40 Hours

While many Americans long for the days when they worked only 40 hours per week, several European countries have recently reduced the standard workweek below 40 hours.

The boldest recent initiative is France's 35-hour week, which was announced in 1997 and became the legislated standard in 2000. The "shorter workweek" has taken many flexible forms, including extra days off (an average of 16 per year), shorter daily hours, and alternating four- and five-day weeks. In 2001, France's national planning agency found "indisputable" evidence that work-time reduction was creating vast numbers of

leap forward, the Netherlands (36 or 38 hours), Denmark (37), Norway (37.5), and Belgium (39 in 1999, 38 in 2003) have relied on national agreements between employers and labor unions to gradually cut the workweek. By 1996, almost one-quarter of German employees enjoyed a 35-hour week through their collective agreement.

A shorter workweek is not only on the agenda in Europe's wealthier northern nations. In the 1990s, Portugal cut its workweek from 48 to 40 hours. Portuguese unions, like those in Greece, are now campaigning for 35 hours. Shorter hours are also gaining ground in Spain, where 1.4 million workers had a 35-hour week by the end of 2001.

Not all European countries have been making similar progress. For example, in the United Kingdom, Europe's "long-hours capital," one in six employees works more than 48 hours a week. Still, on average, even British workers put in far fewer hours annually than do Americans.

Four to Six Week Vacations

Many Americans, who have no legally-mandated right to paid vacations, suffer from "vacation deficit disorder." A typical U.S. worker earns only 13.8 vacation days per year, while 22.5 million private sector workers have no paid vacation at all.

Across the Atlantic, the European Union (EU) Working Time Directive requires a minimum of four weeks paid leave each year for all employees, and several EU countries have five weeks (25 working days) of vacation by law. Dutch, German, and Italian workers have gained roughly 30 vacation days, on average, through collective bargaining.

In 1998, a national strike shut down Denmark over the demand for a sixth week of vacation, later phased in through five additional paid leave days. Some might think that Danish workers were asking for too much, but the strike is best seen as a struggle by working people to share in a booming economy, and as an enlightened choice of time over money as the way to take that share. In 2002, Sweden announced plans to catch up with its neighbor by phasing in five more paid leave days, which employees can choose to take as vacation time, individual days off, or shorter daily work hours.

Paid Parental Leave

Spending time with newborn children is one of the most important reasons to scale back hours of paid work. The Family Medical Leave Act gives American parents the right to a mere twelve weeks of unpaid leave after birth or adoption. In Western Europe, parental leave is generally much longer and paid.

Sweden's system is one of the most developed - parents can take 15 months

of job-protected leave per child, at up to 80 percent of their previous pay. The leave can be taken flexibly, at any time until the child reaches eight years of age. A "father's month" - 30 days reserved for the father - encourages men to play a role in child care. In Norway, parents can take 42 weeks of leave at 100 percent of their previous wage, or 52 weeks at 80 percent. German parents have a very lengthy leave entitlement - up to three years, full-time or part-time - but the rate of pay is relatively low: about \$300 per month for two years or \$450 per month for one year.

Right to Choose Conditions

Some European countries, most notably the Netherlands, have recently shifted emphasis from collective work-time measures, such as a shorter standard workweek, to individualized options. In 2000, a new Working Hours Adjustment Act gave Dutch workers the right to reduce their hours of work, while part-timers can request longer hours. Germany introduced similar legislation the same year.

The Price of Success?

There's certainly no evidence to suggest that only the American long-hours model can deliver low unemployment. Work-time reduction has been an important job-creation tool in some countries, such as the Netherlands, although, on its own, it is no guarantee of low unemployment.

Now, what about productivity? Several shorter-hours innovators in Europe - Belgium, France, the Netherlands, and Norway - are actually more productive per hour of labor than is the United States. Higher hourly productivity in these countries is almost certainly due, in part, to shorter work-time's beneficial effects on employee morale, less fatigue and burn-out, lower absenteeism, higher quality of work, and better health.

Take Norway, for example. In 2001, its hourly productivity was 10 per cent higher than the United States, but its annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per person was about 17 per cent lower. The main difference was that Norwegians were working 29 percent fewer hours than Americans. (It's worth noting Norway's poverty rate is one-quarter, and its incarceration rate one-tenth of the US)

In the final analysis, the issue largely boils down to how nations choose to benefit from the capacity to produce more in each hour of labor. Is there more to the good life than maximizing output and consumption? Are work-family balance and a less stressful pace of life equally valuable? If so, then it's time to ask how North America can regain its status as a world leader in creating not only material affluence, but time affluence as well.

Anders Hayden is the author of *Sharing the Work, Sparing the Planet: Work Time, Consumption, & Ecology* (London: Zed Books, 1999). Hayden's essay is excerpted from John de Graaf's *Take Back Your Time: Fighting Overwork and Time Poverty in America* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003). October 24 is the second annual Take Back Your Time Day.



new jobs, helping to bring unemployment down from 12.5 percent in 1997 to an eighteen-year low of 8.6 percent.

A recent major study found that the majority of French workers (60 percent), said that shorter hours had improved their quality of life, versus only 15 percent with a negative experience. The effect on quality of work, however, has been more mixed. Roughly half said the 35-hour week had not changed their working conditions, with others equally divided over whether conditions had improved or deteriorated.

Where complaints exist, increased workloads, as a result of insufficient new hiring, and the effects of increased work-time flexibility - such as more evening and weekend work in return for shorter hours overall - are often the culprits. France's 35-hour week is still a work in progress. But despite some concerns and controversies, it has delivered important employment and quality of life improvements overall.

Rather than a dramatic legislated

Is the universe friendly?

by Geoff Olson

Albert Einstein once said the most important question a human being can ask is "Is the universe friendly?"

Think of that for a moment. How would you answer? If you think the universe is truly friendly and supportive of you, this obviously has a huge effect on your perceptions and behaviour. The same applies if you think cosmos is hostile - or just indifferent to your fate.

On a first reading, Einstein's question is trivially true. If you've decided, consciously or unconsciously, that the universe is friendly, your positive outlook is likely to be mirrored by positive responses from others, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy about your world being fundamentally good. You are likely to have more friends, job offers, etc. Conversely, if you are suspicious by nature, or walk around with a cloud over your head, you're not likely to be much fun at parties, although you may win nodding approval from fellow grumps. At the very least your life is likely to seem a series of disappointments. This is pretty self-evident stuff. From Ralph Waldo Emerson to Dale Carnegie to Wayne Dyer, most of us have heard the drill: life is what you make it.

But if it's Einstein talking, there's a good chance there's more to it than this. Spend a bit of time on it, and you realize the question's depth. This goes far beyond the soothing homilies about high self-esteem, or the pieties of religious dogmatism. This is about whether universe is friendly (unifiable, consoling) or unfriendly (neutral, fragmented, hostile, "other"). From the choice you make, you can extrapolate the direction of subsequent life decisions. Your state of being could evolve from the answer to that one all-important question. But bear with me; because it's a big topic and this essay is all over the map, from childhood psychology to the pest problems of a Hollywood star author, to the paradoxes of cosmology and quantum physics, to the "angel" in the library.

The choice to believe in a friendly or unfriendly universe undoubtedly begins in our early years. It may well be that people who are preternaturally content, seemingly at peace with themselves and the world, were introduced to "a friendly universe" through proper nurturing as infants. Their early experiences became the foundation for their psychic life. The results of less desirable childhood beginnings are also obvious. If a child suffers a traumatic birth, and/or their parents abuse their natural trust, that individual may grow up extrapolating their experience to the whole of existence, always suspecting the worst and failing to trust in others.

Rev. Gerard Pantin is the founder of Service Volunteered for All (SERVOL) in Trinidad and Tobago. In a speech he gave in 2000, he noted how the Yequana Indians of Brazil make sure that their babies are in physical contact with the skin of another human being 24 hours a day for the first two years. "These children

grow up without that emptiness that we modern people spend our lives trying to heal or cope with. A lot of our modern preoccupation with 'feeling good' through sex and drugs dates back to the fact that the way in which we were brought up didn't give us the opportunity of feeling good about our infant bodies."

Citing Einstein's famous line, Pantin adds that "Yequana children, because of

tations drive what we experience. Sci-fi author Michael Crichton supplies an amusing example in his 1988 memoir *Travels*. In the early seventies, flush with success from spinning his novel *The Andromeda Strain* into a critically and commercially acclaimed film, he bought a home in the hills of Los Angeles. A friend asked him if he was afraid of the snakes. "What snakes?" the author asked. The

of the house, and I peered around every corner before I turned it. But, increasingly, I didn't like to go outside at all. I became a prisoner in my own house. I had altered my entire behaviour and my emotional state purely on the basis of something I had been told. I still hadn't seen any snakes. But I was now afraid."

One day he saw his gardener tramping fearlessly around the property. The author asked if there were any rattlers in the area. Sure, his gardener replied, especially in the dry season. Wasn't he worried? The gardener shrugged and said he'd only seen a rattler once in over six years. He simply went and got a shovel and killed it. Only one snake in six years? Crichton's mood brightened. In rational terms, there was really nothing to be worried about. He sat by the pool for the rest of the day.

As the gardener was leaving, he told the author he could be sure there were no snakes on the property, because Crichton had so many gophers.

Gophers! The very critters that the recent homeowner had spent weeks setting traps for, trying to poison, and taking potshots at with his air rifle. All to no effect whatever. "Each morning fresh gopher burrows crisscrossed my lawn. It was extremely frustrating. My house looked like National Gopher Park." Crichton began to rethink how to deal with the tunneling terrors, and eventually the gophers' mortal enemies came to mind. "Was there anything I could do to attract rattlesnakes to my house? Put out some favourite rattlesnake food, or some dishes of water?"

Thinking back on his conceptual gymnastics over pest problems, Crichton realized he went through a whole series of changes without ever actually seeing a snake. "I felt different only because I had shifted perspectives," he noted, at one moment hating gophers, the next fearing snakes, then next hating gopher seven more and wishing for more snakes. "Each shift in perspective was accompanied by a total change in my attitudes, the physiology, my behaviour, my emotions. I was immediately and wholly modified by each new perspective that I adopted."

If a person can change their mind-body state that radically over something as mundane as snakes and gophers, imagine what choosing between a friendly or unfriendly universe might mean to their state of being.

Westerners aren't like the Yequana; we demand empirical evidence for one point of view or the other. And there's certainly no shortage of confirmation for an unfriendly universe - or unfriendly planet, at least. All you have to do is to pick up a daily paper. The universe doesn't seem to have been too friendly recently to the women and children in Sudan, or the rest of Africa for that matter. And that's just the cruelty humans regularly visit upon fellow humans; earthquakes, floods, volcanoes and other natural disasters dispatch thousands yearly. Randomness reigns. If

continued on page 8



Whether it is a cantata or a cruise missile, every cultural artifact we humans have conjured into physical existence began as a dream in someone's head

close bodily contact, not only see the universe as friendly but feel it to be loving." Beginning with a bodily, visceral sense of an all-embracing love, the Yequana don't intellectualize over whether the universe is friendly or not; they carry within themselves the felt conviction that they are loved beings.

That's all well and good, a skeptic may say, but we live in a modern, fast-paced world where such bonding is difficult with our busy schedules. We have to "compete in the market," after all. Besides, what real difference does how we feel about the universe actually make to how it really is?

Well, as they like to say in political circles, perception is reality. Sometimes we need reminding how much our expect-

rattlesnakes, of course, which his friend told him, come out in force during the dry season.

Crichton returned to his magnificent new home in a complete funk and didn't have any fun at all. He just looked for snakes.

"I worried that snakes were sneaking into my bedroom, so I locked all the doors every night to keep the snakes out. I thought snakes might come to the swimming pool to drink the water, so I avoided the swimming pool, particularly in the heat of the day, because the snakes were probably sunning on my deck. I never walked around my property, because I was sure there were snakes in the bushes. I walked only on the little path on the side

continued from page 7
there's anything friendly here, it seems to have the same sense of humour as Mike Tyson.

And as far as mainstream science goes, some intellectuals insist it promote the idea of cosmic indifference, which is pretty much the same thing as unfriendliness from a human point of view. One of the central concepts of orthodox evolutionary theory is that humans are the products of blind chance and selection. Like all other creatures, we're Darwin's wind-up toys, entropically rolling around in a meaningless cosmos, duking it out for resources and mates. In this view, our purpose is no

more than biological: eat, breed, and die. If you can call that purpose.

As cosmologist Steven Weinberg famously concluded in his book *The First Three Minutes*, "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." Yet this scientific-materialist philosophy doesn't have to necessarily result in despair over our apparent lack of purpose here. Some intellectuals exult in the freedom this philosophy offers from the strictures of organized religion and other apparent superstitions. But others aren't so sanguine. As physicist Nick Herbert put it in a bit of doggerel:

Some suffer from a bone-deep fear
That matter's all that matters here
That love and hate and pretty faces
Are naught but atoms changing places.

But is modern science really so unambiguous in its assessment of a lack of purpose for sentient beings? Astronomers now tell that the fundamental constants of the universe (for example, the electron's charge or the rest mass of the proton) are precisely set at just the right values to allow the emergence of life. This so-called "anthropic principle" has been endlessly debated by academics. Some physicists see it as evidence that, as Princeton University's Freeman Dyson has it, "the universe must know in some sense that we were coming." Others say the anthropic principle is no more than a tautology - a universe hostile to observers wouldn't have anyone sitting around wondering about such things. A trendy new theory in cosmology is that we live in a fathomless "multiverse," with universes popping into being all the time, and we just happen to be - we can only be - in one of the lucky ones.

Try as you might, it seems damnably impossible to settle Einstein's question about a friendly universe with absolute finality, at least in any intellectual sense. If you believe that this plane of existence is all there is, and that death rings down the curtain for your little playlet, you might have some difficulty believing this universe is anything other than indifferent. Philosopher Bertrand Russell once said our knowledge must "build upon the solid bedrock of uncompromising despair," but does this represent the heroism of unflinching realism, or an existential seed program for psychic and cultural

implosion?

Either way, the unfriendly proponents can trot out innumerable historical anecdotes to make their case, from the fall of Greece to the rise of Nazi Germany. When whole societies decline, faith doesn't necessarily protect the faithful. In fact, it's often the faithful who are the problem, with "God's children" killing God's children.

This is bigger than a simple question of religious belief (after all, there are plenty of fear-driven fundamentalists who believe in an unfriendly universe presided over by a smite-happy deity). Ultimately, it seems to come down to taking a leap of faith, and choosing to buy into one universe or the other. Einstein didn't say the universe was or wasn't friendly; he said it was the most important question a human being can ask. It is what you choose to believe that is critical. And here's where things get really interesting, because choice has a very, very, interesting relationship to the quantum world.

A fundamental experiment in quantum physics involves shining a beam of light at a barrier with two open slits. Some of the light gets through the barrier, forming an interference pattern on a screen. This indicates light has the property of a wave. Yet if you close one slit, leaving the other open, the light appears as just a single shaft of light built up photon by photon on the screen, which indicates that light has a particle property.

Forget for a moment that no one has ever truly figured out how light can be both a particle and a wave at the same time, things which are as different as baseballs and Bach fugues. The critical part is that how it behaves depends upon the experimental setup. Ask nature a question a certain way, and you get a certain answer. (According to quantum physicist Werner Heisenberg, "What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.") Recent variations on this experiment, where scientists try to "trick" light by changing the testing apparatus while the photons are in flight, have only led to the spooky conclu-

sion that the light behaves as if it knows what the experimenters are up to. That seems like a pretty nutty interpretation. The one marginally less nutty alternative, favoured by most quantum physicists is that our intentions seem to drive, in large part, how certain physical phenomenon manifest to our consciousness.

In other words, the nature of the question determines the reality you perceive. Our choice plays a critical role in determining the outcome of a situation in our local space-time - at least for experiments with photons.

If our choices have this kind of dynamic going with the quantum world, the question then becomes how deep does this craziness run? Scientists insist such paradoxical phenomena are limited to the nanoworld of the quantum. At larger scales, they are smudged out by the cancellation of a huge number of differing quantum states. It's called "decoherence," and it prevents the Alice in Wonderland weirdness of quantum physics from erupting into the kitchen, boardroom, or lab. Yet with the discovery of "microtubules" in human

neurons, there is some evidence that the human brain may actually process some information on a quantum level, which may or may not reopen this whole can of worms for the macro level of reality.

So what does this all mean? Is the universe the ultimate Rorschach blot, with the meaning only what we read into it? Or is there something even more interesting than this going on?

From "many worlds" interpretation of quantum mechanics to the research into parapsychology at Princeton and other universities, it is apparent that the simple push-pull, subject-object model of reality is no longer tenable. What we are discovering is that sentient beings bring a profound level of participation to the construction of reality. Of course, the create-our-own-reality idea has been around for some time, but the situation may be more subtle, and even stranger, than we think.

How far does consciousness go in determining the reality we experience? Earlier, I remarked on some remarkable

A trendy new theory in cosmology is that we live in a fathomless "multiverse," with universes popping into being all the time

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experiments in physics that demonstrate the bizarre role played by the observer/experimenter, and how the nature of their inquiry conditions the answer received. In a 1978 lecture, author John Michell took this idea one step further, describing what he saw as the universe's habit "of reflecting back ideas projected onto it, of seeming to provide positive evidence for any theory that can possibly be formulated." He claimed you could test it for yourself. "Take the wildest idea imaginable, commit yourself to believing it, become obsessed with it, and you'll soon find all kinds of evidence turning up as confirmation of it."

"This same risk is notoriously inherent in all occult studies. If one is studying a subject intensely, particularly if writing about it, ideas on that subject from unknown sources flood into the mind, and phenomena connected with it may even intrude into one's life, as the raven of Edgar Allen Poe intruded upon the midnight scholar."

According to Michell, this phenomenon infects scientific research. "The great Charles Fort gave several humorous instances of the same experiment yielding two different results, each one gratifying the experimenter." Recently, the same problem has been noted in parapsychology investigations into the "sense of being stared at" PhD psychologist Dean Radin notes the hair-raising possibility that the scientific world picture may be in large part an extremely robust consensual hallucination, cobbled together by the participatory nature of our collective consciousness with the physical world.

"The universe is so generous that it gives to anyone, crank, scientist or religious believer, the evidence which confirms his particular belief or theory," wrote Michell.

If there is any merit to this meta-mad idea - and it may be worthwhile to entertain it for a while before you choose to discard it for its crazy consequences - it means we need to be very choosy about what we believe in. There is more at stake than just our choice of words; it means we can power our delusions and fantasies far more than we previously thought. That sounds like the royal road to the loony bin - the old line that "neurotics build castles in the sky, but psychotics live in them" - but according to Michell there is more to this than just the "delusory tendencies in the universal feedback effect."

"I now come to the interesting part, the way in which the effect can be used creatively," he said. "Study a subject, allow it to obsess you, ask questions of it, and next time you visit a library, a bookstore or a friend's house, you may pick up the one book in the world which gives the answer

you were looking for. Coincidences can be invoked. I have asked many writers about this, and nearly all of them were able to give striking personal examples of being helped by this useful aspect of the feedback effect which Arthur Koestler attributes to library angels."

After reading through a score of library cases, wrote the late Arthur Koestler, "one is tempted to think of library angels in charge of providing cross-references." Koestler was the one who put the seraphic spin on this particular species of good fortune. His library angel will be no stranger to many writers, readers and researchers. Whether she's sister to serendipity, or just cousin to dumb luck, she seems to make her appearance at the moment when your guard is down. You're either idly seeking some piece of trivia, or giving up on some search through the stacks, when suddenly the right book or magazine falls at your feet open at the right passage.

The sign of a friendly universe, or just a playful one? Or just a misinterpretation of chance events?

In Notes From a Small Island, travel writer Bill Bryson tells of his own encounter with the library angel, after pitching a story to a travel magazine on, of all things, extraordinary coincidences.

"When I came to write the article," Bryson writes, "I realized that, although I had plenty of information about scientific studies into the probability of coincidence, I didn't have nearly enough examples of remarkable coincidences themselves..." After writing a letter to the magazine saying he wouldn't be able to deliver, Bryson "left

the letter on top of his typewriter to post the next day," and drove off to his job at The Times of London. Here he saw a notice on the door of an elevator, altering staff to the literary editor's annual sale of review copies sent to The Times. "The place was full of mingling people. I stepped into the melee and what should be the very first book my eyes fell on but a paperback called Remarkable True Coincidences. How's that for a remarkable true coincidence? But here's the uncanny thing. I opened it up and found that the very first coincidence it discussed concerned a man named Bryson."

Of course, given the millions, if not billions, of variables that interact throughout the course of the day, it's impossible for there not to be the occasional coincidences, which are no more than that. But every once in a while some whopper drops on your head that gives you doubts. When a highly unlikely textual coincidence occurred to astrophysicist Jacques Vallee during a Los Angeles cab ride, he was inspired to consider the nature of chance. Pondering the equivalence of

continued on page 18



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Jane Jacobs's Dark Age Ahead

reviewed by Geoff Olson

In popular imagination, the Dark Ages are a historical pothole, albeit a big one, along Western civilization's ascending road. The era is the stuff of History Channel episodes and Monty Python skits. ("How do you know he's a king?" "He doesn't have shit all over him!") For author Jane Jacobs, Dark Ages are times when surviving generations don't even have the opportunity to wonder how their culture could have disappeared so utterly - because the very memory of it has disappeared too.

Jacobs's 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, helped redefine urban planning in Canada and the US. In her latest work, the respected urban theorist and polymath rails against what she sees as signs of serious decline in our culture. The author suggests a Dark Age isn't a one-shot deal for any given place and time, but rather a strange attractor in the chaos of history. Museums around the world are littered with the fragmentary shards of once-vibrant cultures that for all intents and purposes disappeared off the face of the Earth. Jacobs cites the culture "whose people produced the splendid Lascaux cave paintings some 17,000 years ago, in what is now southwestern France" and the "culture of the builders of ambitious stone and wood henges in western Europe before the Celts arrived with their Iron Age technology and intricately knotted art."

There are many other examples. For 8,000 years, Mesopotamia led the world in mathematics, medicine and language, but by the birth of Christ, it was just about all over for the cradle of civilization. Chinese commerce and technology dominated half the globe in the 15th century. In less than 100 years, China began its slide into darkness. Anthropologists still debate the reasons for the massive and sudden collapse of the Mayan civilization in the Yucatan peninsula. Closer to home, we have the example of the aboriginal cultures of the Pacific Northwest, many of which were generationally crippled through residential schools, which broke the link between children and elders through elimination of the native tongue.

Jacobs anticipates the reader's doubt that a culture as massively documented as ours could simply cave and disappear. "We have books, magnificent storehouses of knowledge about our culture; we have pictures, both still and moving, and oceans of other cultural information that every day wash through the Internet, the daily press, scholarly journals, the careful catalogues of museum exhibitions, the reports compiled by government bureaucracies on every subject from judicial decisions to regulations for earthquake-resistant buildings, and, of course, time capsules."

"Don't we have it all as well preserved as last season's speeches which are ready to nourish your descendants if need be?"

Paper burns (Library of Alexandria,

anyone?) and electronic records not only require working knowledge of the software, but operating systems to recognize the software, running on hardware the software is compatible with, hooked up to a functioning electrical supply. Even CDs will decay over time. Given a large enough collapse and a few generations, back-engineering our civilization may be a tall order.

Working from the historical record, Jacobs insists that decline can come from many factors acting in tandem, in a negative feedback loop, with human recollection of a civilization swirling down the memory hole, along with mathematical and accounting systems, civil laws, artistic and literary norms, manners, and all the rest, including ephemera in PowerPoint



Jane Jacobs

and Excel. "During a Dark Age, the mass amnesia of survivors becomes permanent and profound. The previous way of life slides into an abyss of forgetfulness, almost as decisively as if it had not existed."

In spite of the book's provocative title, Jacobs does not believe a Dark Age is inevitable for Western civilization. But she feels this can only be accomplished if "five pillars of culture" remain standing. These pillars are increasingly in jeopardy in North America and elsewhere, according to Jacobs:

One: Community and family, levels of culture that are so tightly interconnected they cannot be teased apart without doing damage to both. One of many possible civic responses to the decline of family income, Jacobs says, is greater public transit, freeing up low-income earners from the massive costs associated with owning motor vehicles.

Two: Higher education. The author excoriates modern educational institutions as "credentialing bodies." These are little more than degree mills, discouraging independent thinking while rewarding students who parrot the received wisdom in any given field. The risks to democracy are obvious.

Three: Science and technology. Jacobs cites a number of cases in which critical thinking has gone missing from empirical research. One is Chicago's 1995 heatwave, in which hundreds of elderly lost their lives to heat stroke and other temperature-related health problems. A league of government researchers concluded there weren't enough air conditioners. One sociologist dug deeper, and discovered that the deaths were significantly lower in a neighbouring area with just as many elderly. The difference: in the neighbourhood with less crime, the residents felt safer leaving their apartments, and didn't cook inside.

Four: Governmental representation. Here she argues for a decentralization of economic decision-making to municipal levels, so urban problems, which differ from city to city, are addressed less by template, and more by efficient allocation to needs. Jacobs dimly regards wholesale privatization as the cannibalization of the public sphere by profit-seeking systems, which she believes, will only erode this pillar further.

Five: Self-policing by the learned professions. The author sees a decline of standards across a broad range of professions, from urban planning to architecture. She cites a three-day seminar at the University of Chicago in the summer of 2002. Three of the most pretentious universities in the US invited executives drawn from the country's largest multinational corporations, for guidance on accounting malpractice. Those in attendance were told that if they were forced to give a legal deposition in the aftermath of a scandal, they should not volunteer any information. This high-level, officially sanctioned retreat from ethical or professional standards, Jacobs insists, is undermining this essential pillar of community.

Jacobs leaves the reader with the uneasy sense that when one bolt after another shears from the social mainframe, the results may be as shockingly counterintuitive as the implosion of New York's Twin Towers. "The collapse of one sustaining cultural institution enfeebles others, making it more likely that others will give way. With each collapse, still further ruin becomes more likely, until finally the whole enfeebled, intractable contraption crashes."

Dark Age Ahead is a sobering read, but not necessarily a fatalistic one. We still have time to reverse these trends, the author says. Still, we have to factor in the resistance from special interests. That is, not the poor, the elderly, the sick, students or labourers, but rather balding guys with bucks. From where this reviewer sits, it looks like the Empire is burning, yet barbarians with briefcases are still partying like it's 1999.

Dark Age Ahead by Jane Jacobs, Random House Canada \$29.95. Reviewer Geoff Olson can be reached at geoff@telus.net

2004 US election True vote or computer fraud?

TRIBUTE TO ATHAN LEE GIBBS, SR.

by Bo Filter

Athan Gibbs died under suspicious circumstances in a two-vehicle collision just north of Nashville on March 12. He had begun marketing the US-government-certified TruVote voter validation and verification system, a touchscreen machine that gives voters a verifiable paper audit trail.

The machine issues a number that the voter can verify through an election office printout, a toll free number or a secure site on the internet. The machine rectifies voting irregularities cited by a joint study conducted by the Carnegie Corporation, Cal Tech and MIT. The joint project found that between four and six million votes were lost in the 2000 election. The Tennessee General Assembly presented Gibbs with a joint resolution honouring his invention.

In Washington, Congress is deliberating bills that will mandate Gibbs's voter verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT). Some States have moved ahead. Ohio, Nevada and California have executive orders directing county election officials to only buy electronic voting machines equipped with the VVPAT.

Gibbs was driven by his experienc-

es growing up in Memphis. During the 1950s and '60s, he watched minorities struggle to exercise their right to vote. He decided to act after reviewing a US study of the 2000 presidential election. The Commission on Civil Rights found that votes cast by African-Americans in the decisive state of Florida were 10 times more likely to be rejected. Readers may recall the many media reports of complaints during that election about large numbers of missing votes from democratically controlled black counties.

Just prior to the election, Jeb Bush, Florida's governor and brother of the president, openly boasted on television that he would "deliver Florida" to the Republican ticket. On election day voter complaints forced a recount. Al Gore appeared to be winning. The count was stopped. Then, without a Constitutional

mandate, a Republican-filled supreme court appointed George W. Bush to the presidency. To stop the vote and impose authority constitutes a coup d'etat, a denunciation of democratic process. Why Americans did not revolt is unclear.

To put salve on the wound, the state of Florida declared that sweeping election reforms would be legislated. Yet, the 2002 primary election proved to be no better. Electronic voting machines continued to make votes disappear. For instance, in Boca Raton, popular mayor Emil Danciu came in third, 8 percent under expectations. He suspected foul play when his stronghold home precinct reported low numbers.

Electronic voting system expert Rebecca Mercuri reported during court proceedings that California-based Sequoia Voting Systems had sold its machines under trade secret protection, disallowing proper inspection. So what is Sequoia?

According to researcher Steve Moore, Sequoia is one of three voting-system manufacturers, all Republican-led corporations actively trying to elect Bush. The other two are Ohio-based Diebold Election Systems and Omaha-based Election Systems and Software. Moore observes that by leaving "absolutely no verifiable paper trail," the big three are helping to rig the November 2 election, instigating a "bloodless coup." Moore backs up his claim by point-

ing to 2002 voting results. For example, in Georgia, incumbent Democratic Governor Ray Barnes was defeated, giving the Republicans their first victory there in 134 years. The poll results showed a miraculous 12-point shift in the last 48 hours. Right after the vote, Diebold erased all the ballots, leaving no record or paper trail. In Minnesota and Colorado, Senate races produced the same surprise Republican victories, giving them control of the US Senate.

Diebold's CEO, Walden O'Dell is a major fundraiser for Bush, writing to contributors in 2003 that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes for the president next year." With the big three's machines in many other states, an election landslide seems eminent. So what might save the day in the last hour?

A California voting systems panel has charged O'Dell with deceptive business practices, which may lead to criminal charges. For instance, Diebold installed uncertified software in its machines in 17 counties without notifying state officials. Worse, a manipulation mechanism was found

hidden in the Diebold central tabulator. A two-digit code creates a second voteset, which in turn cues the voting system to read the totals from the bogus set of votes. The design took a dozen version adjustments to perfect, according to researcher Bev Harris. If a vote is not changed, it can go missing. Diebold spokesman David Bear told Vanity Fair that negative votes can be entered into its machines.

Researcher Lynn Landes says that voting machines will produce all of the election results for the upcoming 2004 presidential election, while Newsweek reports that they will be used by about 28 percent of the country, quite a discrepancy but still enough to throw the election. If Republicans stole Senate power in the 2002 election, what can we expect for 2004? The number of states requiring VVPAT machines appears too small to hold off a massive voting sham. Landes warns her fellow Americans that they are "missing the boat on the biggest crisis facing our democracy ... Americans aren't really voting. Machines are. Call it faking democracy." Their government will not be coming to the rescue. Hillary Clinton has co-sponsored a bill to require a paper trail, but it has been stalled in Congress. Only seven of 229 Republicans have signed on to the bill, prompting Steve Moore to wonder if "they've got Georgia on their minds." Athan Gibbs's dream will have to wait a little longer, providing that the individual states can wake up in time to do the job of Congress.

Bo Filter is author of the newly released book: *The Cause of Wars and Aggression*. www.globaljusticepublishing.com. See also www.globalresearch.ca and www.blackboxvoting.org



**A Diebold voting machine.
Will it be compromised in
the November US presiden-
tial election?**

Fair voting system in BC one step closer

by Paul George

On September 12, BC's unique Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (CA) decided BC deserves a voting system where every vote counts.

For the last eight months 160 citizens randomly chosen from BC's voters list - one man and one woman from each of BC's 79 electoral districts plus two people of First Nations' heritage - have assessed whether BC would be better off with a fairer voting system.

All spring they learned how different voting systems work. All summer they sought public input. Now they're making decisions. The CA's work ends December 15. It will write the question that goes to referendum at the next general election. The new electoral system on the ballot must pass by 60 percent to be adopted.

Over 98 percent of the people giving input through the 50 public hearings held across BC, by mail and on-line to the CA's website www.citizensassembly.bc.ca, wanted change. All agreed that our

current system has serious flaws. It produces overblown majorities, like the last election when the Liberals got 97 percent of the seats with 58 percent of the vote, and wrong winners, like the 1996 election when the NDP won a majority government despite getting less of the vote than the Liberals.

On September 12, the CA members selected proportionality, local representation and voter choice to be the three most important elements in a new voting system. In a proportional system a political party gets seats in proportion to its popular vote (10 percent of the vote earns 10 percent of the seats). Local representation means that voters elect someone to represent their geographical region, like we elect MLAs today.

Over 70 percent of the 1,500 people who sent on-line submissions to the CA recommended a mixed member proportional (MMP) system like New Zealand's where voters get two votes, one for a

local constituency representative and one for the political party of their choice. (This system was well explained by Guy Dauncey in the April 2002 issue of *Common Ground*.) The party vote is used to elect MLAs from party lists to "top up" a party's representation in the legislature if it did not get its fair share of seats through winning constituency contests.

The other system being considered, backed in less than five percent of submissions to the CA, is called single transferable vote (STV). It is a complex system of large electoral districts with three or more MLAs elected in each. Voters rank the candidates in order of preference. The counting system is complex with people's second and subsequent choices weighing in if first choice candidates do not get above the minimum vote needed to be elected. This system is less proportional than MMP.

Let's hope the CA listens to the public input and designs an MMP system to fit BC. MMP is more proportional, more popular and makes most voters' first choice count towards representation. It is simpler to understand and explain. MMP has a proven record of electing more women and has the best chance of being adopted on May 17, 2005.

Paul George is a director of the Free Your Vote Society www.freeyourvote.bc.ca

Escape the pace

by Lisa Rickwood

"On the keyboard of life, always have one finger on the escape key."

- Anonymous

It's a miserable, cold Tuesday morning and you've slept through your alarm again. You race through the first part of your morning then hit the highway like an Indy 500 racecar driver. Your heart pounds, road rage builds and you fantasize about ditching work, returning to bed, and pulling that cozy duvet high over your head. Instead, you go to work, with the full knowledge that overwhelming tasks will undoubtedly inundate you. It's precisely at that moment you dream of cloning yourself like Michael Keaton did in the movie, *Multiplicity*.

The film focuses on a time-stressed man who can't keep up with work and home demands, so he enlists the help of scientists and produces a clone of himself so he can be in two places at once. Everything appears fine until he realizes the copy has duplicated itself to achieve more. To make matters worse, the third version is less effective, like a photocopy of a photocopy.

Who hasn't dreamt of having an identical twin slide into their life for a day or two? As the world spins faster and faster, the hours in the day seem to shrink. In the early 1980s, a US physician called the phenomenon *time sickness* and used it to describe the belief time is getting away and we don't have enough of it, and one must move faster to catch up. This preoccupation with time didn't happen overnight; it commenced with the advent of the calendar. Ancient nomadic civilizations used a calendar to determine when to plant and harvest crops, and when to relocate their villages. The ability to measure time was important for the survival of these cultures.

Once we discovered how to measure years, months, weeks and days, we were free to slice time into smaller increments such as: hours, minutes and seconds. This measurement of time became important after the Industrial Revolution. The factories that popped up across North America used to monitor an employee's productivity, loyalty and work ethic. It wasn't uncommon for workers to spend more than 12 hours a day in factories. Now fast forward to the 21st century to where companies sink or float based on the clock.

Couriers would never survive if time wasn't a key to the success of their business. Imagine what would happen if they told a major client his important documents for a proposed business deal would arrive sometime in the near future.

Consider companies and corporations that push their products into the market before their competitors? Would they survive if they had a *laissez-faire* attitude?

People believe our need for speed is a 21st century invention. It's not. Our lives move quickly due to centuries of time focus and a large dash of new technology. Mix these ingredients together and you've got a recipe for disaster.

Since technology is fast, we pressure ourselves. Communication is immediate, so we must be too. It's not acceptable to return a phone call a few hours later; we must phone back within the hour. We can't take our vacation and leave our computers at home; we must keep wired so we don't lose that unpredictable client. To catch-up, we stay up late, work overtime, eliminate exercise and skip meals. Our health suffers and our mental state isn't much better. Resentment, road rage and lack of patience for others become our mainstay.

If you think you don't suffer from stress or time constraints, consider how many times you've misplaced your keys, blatant-

phone call from a woman who found my purse on a busy road.

I really became an expert on stress when my husband and I bought a 42-year-old high-end men's wear store during a recession in a dead downtown. Three months into our business, we hired a wonderful man. He was a kind and jovial individual who moved from the mainland to Vancouver Island for a relaxed lifestyle. My life irrevocably changed on our employee's fourth day of work in our store. I was rearranging a display when the sickening sound of a heavy weight hitting the floor chased the silence from the room. It turned my head and felt air leave my lungs. Our fun-loving colleague was lying on the floor, and he desperately needed medical intervention. Intense panic gripped me, but I pushed the fear deep into my gut, phoned 911 and performed CPR. His life was in my hands. Moments passed before an ambulance attendant whisked him away.

Hours later, police informed us he died. He had suffered a massive heart attack and nothing would have saved him. A heavy, sad feeling entered my body and I felt invisible walls closing in on me. I felt I

amidst the chaos of your life.

If slowing down and relaxing seems ludicrous, remember that everything in nature needs downtime to rest and rejuvenate. Why should humans be any different?

I have a beautiful peach tree that grows near the back window of my house. In the first week of August, the tree's branches are laden with plump and juicy, yellow and pink fruit that's warm to the touch. This tree doesn't always yield abundant fruit; every second year, it reduces its yield. Like breaks in the rhythm of music, or the poignant lull in conversation, and like this tree we need to pause throughout our day to rest and recharge ourselves.

Our greatest innovations and discoveries are made when people slow down and temporarily pause in life. Now imagine how different our lives would be if Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison or Albert Einstein had found themselves too busy and too stressed to record their magnificent findings.

Decades ago, peace activist Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is more to life than increasing its speed."

When you take 15 minutes to rest, sleep, walk or just be, you deal more effectively with stress and challenges. If you approach each moment from a calm state, issues resolve more easily and your life feels serene.

Escaping the pace is about putting your needs first and being sure to take a mini holiday every day. When you practise this philosophy for 30 days, you'll automatically make time for mini retreats.

The definition of a quick retreat is doing anything you enjoy that takes less than 30 minutes. Of course you can have longer retreats that take an hour or a day, but this may be difficult if you lead a busy life. Even in the busiest life, there are small hidden pockets of free time. This time can be used to practise your escapes which may include: reading, walking, exercising, snoozing and dancing - whatever makes you slow down, relax, live in the moment and feel refreshed.

For example, how much time do you waste waiting at the doctor's office? There you might try reading a novel or doing a crossword puzzle. And you might try breathing deeply and meditating, or listening to your CDs.

Speed isn't the enemy; it is knowing when one must slow down to put balance in one's life. Some things shouldn't be slow, like the internet and slow drivers in the fast lane. Balance is about knowing when to travel 110 km/h and when to drive off the freeway for a mini holiday. If you practise this philosophy every day, you'll never need an identical twin.

Lisa Rickwood is author of: *Escape the Pace: 100 Fun and Easy Ways to Slow Down and Enjoy Your Life*. She resides on Vancouver Island with her family. 250-753-4100 info@escapethepace.com www.escapethepace.com

Half our life is spent
trying to find something
to do with the time we
have rushed through
life trying to save.

- Will Rogers

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ly driven five blocks without remembering if you traveled through a red light, or placed your coffee cup on your car's roof before driving to work. We're all guilty, and it stems from sleep deprivation, stress and multi-tasking throughout our days. We're not living in the moment because we're thinking about the next great thing we must accomplish.

I know about stress and the need for speed because I'm a recovering "speedaholic." Years ago, I worked as an advertising consultant for a daily newspaper and was proud of the speed at which I conducted my life. I walked, talked and drove fast. Ironically, I only received one speeding ticket and that was while keeping pace with traffic.

Another time, I was late for work and placed my purse on top of my vehicle so I could load supplies into my car. In my haste to race to the office, I drove away with the purse on the roof. I received a

should have been able to save him; it took a long time for this feeling to leave me.

For the next few months, I worked six days a week, managed a household and two young children. During this time, I caught colds and the flu and suffered from strange crippling viruses that attacked my muscles and cartilage on my ribcage. I grew despondent and desperate. Something had to change or I'd suffer a breakdown or die. I didn't have the luxury of quitting my career and scaling back, so I decided to change my attitude about stress. I read every self-help and health book on the market and added exercise, nutritious food and more sleep to my life. Months later, my depression lifted, and I felt happy, healthy and energized. Best of all, I discovered a wonderful antidote for speed, slowing down and escaping the pace.

Life doesn't need to be this way. You can escape every day and take a mini holiday

The road less travelled

ETHICS IN ACTION AWARDS OCTOBER 21

by Maureen Cureton

For a little coffee company from Saanichton, BC, the road less travelled led to a poor farming community in Antioquia, Colombia.

Everybody's got to make a living, but how did Level Ground Trading Company end up in rural South America? The path for the four Canadian families who started Level Ground was very much directed by their goal of earning a good living, while making sure that the living was good for their trade partners as well.

The initial plan was to establish a business on Vancouver

Island that would also help coffee farmers in far away Antioquia. That was 1997, and since that time co-founder Hugo Ciro and his visionary partners have taken a road that leads from the Colombian highlands, on to Peru and Bolivia and back to Colombia's southern regions. Along the way, Level Ground's Vancouver Island operations expanded, sales increased and the product mix became increasingly diversified.

But there's more. Level Ground has taken a higher path, one that integrates social and environmental responsibility into every aspect of business.

By importing coffee from a cooperative of small-scale farmers in Colombia, Level Ground helps them improve their standard of living and earn enough money to pay for their children's schooling. Dealing directly with the farmers' co-op leaves out the mega corporations and the plantation-style production that has caused environmental and social devastation in South America. In many communities in the South, agri-business razes vast tracts of land for monoculture operations and farm workers receive only meagre wages while suffering from the health effects of exposure to chemical pesticides.

In addition to their commitment to paying fair wages to the farmers, Level Ground is helping to strengthen the community and protect the environment. The company established a foundation called Famicafé, which is a registered non-profit organization in Colombia that provides funding and hands-on support for education, job creation and organic farming initiatives. In 2004 alone, the foundation paid for books, tuition and uniforms for more than 185 students. This is not charity; this is socially responsible business and it's good business to support the communities in which you operate. Without access to reasonable wages, many farm families in Latin America are abandoning the land and migrating to the cities to

find work. Level Ground is helping families stay in their communities, maintain their traditional livelihoods and improve their quality of life. Along the way, Level Ground is importing great coffee.

While every street corner in Vancouver seems to be a testimony to the increasing commerce for java, the world-wide coffee market fluctuates wildly. Small-scale coffee growers and small businesses have no control over the price of this commodity, but they are particularly vulnerable to the economic challenges of these fluctuations. Level Ground

realized that the success of its business, as well as the livelihood of its partners in Colombia, relied too much on these larger market forces. So in 2001, Level Ground donated funds to the Antioquia farm community for the purchase of a commercial food dehydrator. Additionally, it sponsored training in food drying techniques. Today, the fruit trees that help shade the coffee crop are another source of revenue for the Colombian families and Level Ground has diversified its product line to include packaged dried fruit. In addition to increasing household incomes for the farmers, this new venture provides employment to displaced women who work in the fruit drying business. Employees receive fair wages, health benefits and school tuition for their children.

Level Ground's leadership in ethical business does not stop there. Its commitment to environmental and social responsibility has led it to other South American countries as well. In Bolivia, Level Ground is partnering with certified organic coffee farmers and in Peru it is working with a fair-trade certified cooperative. In southern Colombia, it is supporting small-scale sugarcane farmers, who are using environmentally friendly methods to grow premium sugarcane.

Level Ground Trading Company may be taking the road less travelled, but it is not alone. More and more companies are recognizing the benefits of ethical business and enjoying the rewards associated with social and environmental responsibility. Perhaps this is hard to believe when Conrad Black's Hollinger scandals, Enron, Monsanto suing farmers, and other bleak stories dominate the business media. Yet, there is good news too about companies blazing new trails through their commitment to ethical business. Each year in British Columbia, the Ethics in Action Awards generate some of that good news by honouring leaders in community care, environmental excellence, or overall leadership in ethical business.

Level Ground was a 2003 Ethics in Action recipient. At this year's awards, 28 finalists will vie for top honours. Award nominees come from large and small companies and a wide range of industry sectors. Want to hear some good news? Join business leaders from Happy Planet, QLT Inc., Nic's Garage, Harrop Procter Community Coop, Nat's Pizza, Westport Innovations, Novex Couriers, Electronic Arts and other nominees as they vie for the 2004 Ethics in Action Awards.

The award stake place October 21 at the Fairmont Waterfront Hotel in Vancouver. www.ethicsinaction.com. Join past winners and this year's finalists for an evening of inspiring stories and great food. The Fairmont, a past Ethics in Action winner for environmental excellence, will feature a fine dining experience organic style. This year's award winners will share their stories in a talk-show style event, hosted by BCTV news anchor, Sophie Lui.

Writer Maureen Cureton is a business consultant who also teaches international business at Royal Roads University and sustainable business management at Langara College.

Editor's note: In 2001, Common Ground magazine received the Ethics in Action award for on-going social responsibility in business.

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Scared Sacred

Film review by John William

CULTURE

SAME PLANET. DIFFERENT WORLDS. VIFF

Velcrow Ripper's *Scared Sacred* explores the relation between suffering and the sacred. Wanting to know if "the stories of the survivors of the great tragedies of human history" had any message of hope in them, Ripper spent five years traveling the globe in search of those stories. To prepare himself, he would spend time in a religious facility (from mosques to monasteries) in each country before going out to explore it.

What he found, in those five years, were



In suffering is the possibility of compassion

eloquent voices of ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances doing their best to light candles against the darkness.

In Bhopal, India, where a Union Carbide pesticide factory accident killed at least 8,000 outright and has killed twice more

since it happened in 1984, his documentary uncovers people who refuse to give up, people who say "There is possibility if there is compassion."

In Cambodia, in the Killing Fields, he finds a young man who was forced to watch his parents be killed by the Khmer Rouge and was told to smile, or die, while doing so. Trained to plant landmines, he now spends his life searching them out to defuse them.

In Bosnia, in Sarajevo, he discovers an artist couple who lived right on Sniper's Alley, who tell him that even in the continuous carnage they sought through their art to "exchange negative energy of the world into positive vibration of the human soul."

In India, at the turn of the century, he hears the Dalai

Lama say "The concept of war is based on the concept of 'we' and 'they'" and that the first disarmament must be internal.

In Hiroshima, he finds a nuclear blast survivor who says "We need to know each other."

Nearly overwhelmed by the pain and courage, Ripper goes into a meditation retreat and discovers that contrary to popular belief, meditation is not a retreat from reality, but a total immersion in it. Everything appears. Fear and compassion in equal measure.

He leaves the retreat to visit Afghanistan again, after foreign military has pushed back some of the worst people of the Taliban period. He meets a young woman in an underground movement which supports women in Afghanistan. She tells him her country is turned into a cemetery with "moving dead," numbed by centuries of war. Pushing back the remaining darkness is the way her movement deals with the pain.

In New York City just after the World Trade Center attack, where he "quite literally" breathes in suffering, he shows us a Zen teacher who says a reason many people come to look at the ruins is not to gawk, but to "connect in their hearts with their vulnerability."

In Israel, members of families from

both the Jewish and Palestinian groups who lost children in that continuing carnage tell him "we paid the highest price possible" so "if we can talk, anyone can."

Ripper himself concludes the film with the statement which sums up the underlying



ing theme in the movie: "dread allows me to see each face as my own." To make sure we do not lose sight of this, he says "We cannot lose the freedom to choose the way we respond to whatever comes our way."

Mehboob Bi, Satinath Sarangi, Aki Ra, Amina and Nejadad Bejovic, the Dalai Lama, Kae Goh Ogura, Zoelya, Saher, Sensei Enkyo, Sarnar Jan, Rabbi David Zeller, Rami Elhanan, George and Najwa Sa'ada, Robi Damelin and Velcrow Ripper appear as themselves. Heroes all.

www.scaredsacred.org

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Festival and beyond

FILMS WORTH WATCHING by Robert Alstead

The Motorcycle Diaries (Diarios de Motocicleta), which opened at the Vancouver International Film Festival and is now out on general theatrical release, explores the political awakening of revolutionary pin-up Ernesto (Che) Guevara as a young man. Breaking from his studies at medical school, the 23-year-old asthmatic Che and his 29-year-old doctor friend Alberto Grenado set off from Buenos Aires in 1952 to cross the South American continent on a clapped-out Norton motorbike (jokingly referred to as The Mighty One).

The often amusing differences between the two men - the one libidinous and carefree the other steadfast and idealistic - come immediately into focus at an early stop in the trip at the villa of Che's girlfriend, daughter of an affluent and disapproving family. The romantic Che (Gael Garcia Bernal, seen previously in Y Tu Mama Tambien) bristles at Grenado's (Rodrigo De la Serna) strongly worded advice to have his way with the girl so they can embark on the next stage of the journey.



The Motorcycle Diaries

In spite of their differences, close scrapes and sobering experiences draw the two men together. The longer they travel, often through fascinating landscapes, the more both of them are affected by the legacy of Latin America's colonial past. Encounters with spiritually crushed peasants and a long stint working with patients on a remote Amazonian leper colony run by nuns, further stirs their sense of responsibility to those less well off.

The Motorcycle Diaries stops short of showing how Che evolves into a soldier of the revolution, which is in keeping with the warm-hearted and surprisingly uncontroversial nature of the film. The appeal is in the way director Walter Salles, as he did in his similarly sentimental but enjoyable road movie Central Station, uses his charismatic duo to call for human compassion and strength of spirit in adversity.

Strength of spirit can be found in spades in What Remains of Us, sponsored by Common Ground at the Vancouver International Film Festival (October 6 at

12 noon, Granville 1 and October 7 at 7:30 pm, Granville 1). There have been many documentaries about the invasion and subsequent ethnic cleansing of Tibet by the People's Republic of China, but the power of this documentary by Francois Prevost and Hugo Latulippe is that it allows ordinary people in Tibet to talk to the outside world about their struggle and hopes.

Kalsang Dolma, a feisty young Tibetan woman who has found refuge in Quebec, smuggled into Tibet a videotaped message from the Dalai Lama calling for continuing peaceful resistance. The filmmakers taped Tibetans' reactions before, during and after playing the message back on a portable video recorder. The simple idea has a powerful effect, releasing a mixture of sadness, amazement, tears of joy, and hope as, often bowed in humility with hands clasped, young and old absorb the Dalai Lama's inspirational words. For some of the elders listening, it is the first time they have seen him since his exile in 1959. Considering the film was shot secretly on a small DV

camera it's well put together, and brings home the remarkable resilience of this simple people under conditions of such pervasive oppression.

Also opening

As well as a smattering of horror movies, the Halloween season brings us Finding Neverland (opening on October 22), the affectionate account of troubled Scottish author J.M. Barrie and his most famous creation Peter Pan. An imaginative tearjerker set at the beginning of the last century, it stars Johnny Depp as Barrie and Kate Winslett as a widowed mother of four young children that Barrie befriends one day while playing with his dog in the park.

Ray (opening on October 29) a biopic of the late pianist Ray Charles (played by Jamie Foxx), charts his life from humble beginnings in Georgia, childhood tragedy which saw him turn blind at seven and then grow into one of the most influential musicians of his generation.

Robert Alstead writes for www.iofilm.ca

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What the BLEEP Do we (k)now!?



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US Mideast policy

The Vancouver-based producers of a provocative, pull-no-punches documentary DVD unveiled their free-to-download work online (www.focced.com) September 11 at Dadabase.

FOCCED is the first in a series that explores the relationship between US foreign policy, domestic budget cuts which hurt the poor, lobbyists in Washington, DC and the electoral process in the USA.

"Fellow Americans ... we've been FOCCED," says narrator Stan Goff, a 22-year-veteran of US Special Forces, former Green Beret, Ranger and member of Delta Force. "The finance, oil, chemical, credit, energy and defence industries on Wall

Street have hijacked the electoral process and turned the federal government into a slot machine designed to do nothing but pay out jackpots." Step by step, Goff and his guests explain the how and why of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, the war in Iraq, and the so-called war on terror.

Three years in the making, FOCCED is two hours and 27 minutes. It is distributed by Thousand Miles Productions, a BC registered not-for-profit educational society, available through internet file sharing services such as Kazaa, Limewire, and Bit Torrent, with the goal of getting people to take an active hand in the political process. It is also available for purchase on DVD.

What the bleep?

Opening October 8, What the Bleep Do We Know!? is an award-winning documentary that says science and spirituality are not different modes of thought, but in fact describe the same thing.

The film asks what reality is and how one can tell. It combines its intricate concepts around a fictional live-action narrative starring Academy Award-winner Marlee Matlin from Children of a Lesser God. It uses 14 top scientists and mystics to illustrate and make comprehensible the notions being offered up.

Filmmakers William Arntz, Betty Chasse and Mark Vincente did not heed the conventional wisdom in Hollywood when they made their documentary.

The scientists featured are physicists William Tiller, Amit Goswami, John Hagelin, Fred Alan Wolf and David Albert; physicians Stuart Mameroff, Jeffrey Satinover, Andrew Newberg and Daniel Monti; chiropractor Joseph Dispenza; biologist Candace Pert; mystics and scholars Ramtha and Miceal Ledwith.

www.whatthebleep.com



Truth struggles under W's thumb

SCIENCE MATTERS

by David Suzuki

Who's got the science chops, George or John? A leading science journal is leaving it up to readers to decide.

For this US presidential race, Nature has done something it has never done before - it posed questions about science priorities to George W. Bush and to John Kerry and printed the answers verbatim in a special news feature.

The move is especially curious given that Nature is a British publication, not US. But, as Nature's editors point out, the US influence is such that, "when it comes to economic, military and other decisions, the US administration's actions are as likely to have as much impact on your country as those of your own government."

So why did Nature choose this particular election to grill the candidates? The answer is simple. Many US scientists find the George W. Bush administration stifling, if not downright scary. And its policies have repercussions throughout the world's scientific community.

From stem cells to missile defence to nuclear weapons and climate change, the Bush administration has stuck to its ideological guns. Up until this summer, for example, official White House

policy has been to deny the human role in global climate change and to tow the oil industry line of waiting for "more research." Bush also raised the ire of researchers by instituting highly restrictive embryonic stem cell research policies - policies that have even drawn fire from Nancy Reagan.

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), meanwhile, has documented dozens of examples of times the Bush administration seems to have altered or suppressed scientific findings to suit its agenda. Since February, more than 5,000 scientists have signed a UCS statement accusing the administration of misusing science. The list includes 48 Nobel laureates, 62 National Medal of Science recipients, and 127 members of the National Academy of Sciences.

So, perhaps for the first time, science could play a significant role in a US federal election. Unfortunately, most of the two candidates' answers to questions

posed by Nature were fairly vague, and not especially insightful. But one answer by President Bush stood out.

Question: Many environmental problems can be attributed to the high levels of consumption in developed nations such as the US. Can science and technology allow everyone on the planet to reach these levels of consumption? Or do

Americans need to change their lifestyles and consume less?

Bush: "America in a very real sense has changed, not by consuming less, but by consuming and producing smarter. We have proven

that economic growth makes possible the environmental progress our country has achieved and will continue to achieve in the future..."

This answer truly exposes the deep root of Bush's ideology. First is the blithe acceptance of the US's overconsumptive ways. Bush suggests that massive consumption levels are fine because they are "smart." This makes no sense. Producing and consuming smarter means doing

more with less - less natural resources and less waste. That's the "smart" part. But this point seems moot to George W. because he would never question Americans' right to consume. Consumption is now as American as apple pie.

Second is the bizarre statement that Bush's administration has somehow "proven" that economic growth makes environmental progress possible. Really? How? How is it possible to consume, consume, consume and say you are making progress? In reality, the environment makes the economy possible. Our Earth is finite. All our resources come from the planet and all our wastes go back to the planet. To have a healthy, sustainable society, we must recognize that the environment and the economy are really the same thing. And we must create policies and procedures that respect this fundamental bottom line.

From this one answer alone, it's no wonder that science has not found a place in the Bush administration. Science tells them things they don't want to hear. It questions. It probes. It is logical. In short, it is everything the Bush administration is not.

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Where are we going?

EARTHFUTURE.COM

by Guy Dauncey

Think big; and I mean BIG. Think the biggest question of all, beyond "Is there life in the Canucks?" and "Is there life elsewhere in the universe?" Think, "Where are we going?"

We're clearly going somewhere, yet it rarely comes up at dinner parties. When you consider the progress of the universe since the Big Bang, 13 billion years ago, it does seem there is a kind of direction. Once there was nothing, and then that nothing went "Bam!" and turned into a gazillion neutrinos. Then "gazoom!" they created hydrogen and all the atoms. Then "whoomf!" and they created galaxies, stars and supernovas. Then great scatterings of dust and meteorites created planetesimals, congealing into planets.

Then slowly, at the bottom of the sea, life began. And life grew from single-celled to multi-celled organisms, and then to a bazillion bacteria; then it grew legs and crawled onto the land. All the time, it grew more complex. We, its latest strain, have a hundred billion neuron cells per brain. We scratched our neurons, and started using tools. Another few scratches, and we're using computers and telescopes,

peering out at the origins of it all. Unless you prefer Noah to Darwin, it does seem there's a kind of direction.

But where? We may have evolutionary space siblings who understand it all but we're still in the dark. (If you're reading this, and your crop circles are intended to tell us, could you make the message a little more clear?) It's getting critical, since we're running on ecological empty. A few more decades like this, and we won't have time to ask the question any more. Our planet is accelerating into the future with no one at the helm. It's a very scary thought. We've got national and corporate leaders, all busily pursuing their own agendas, but very few who we can truly call planetary leaders.

The core of the uncertainty may be the uncertainty principle itself, which says that reality is what we observe. If we observe direction, we create direction; if we don't, there is none. That brings every moment of the future down to a choice.

The core of the uncertainty may be the uncertainty principle itself, which says that reality is what we observe.

If we can't agree on a direction, we'll continue to wander.

The core of the problem may also be that we can't agree if there is a spiritual reality or not. If there is no spiritual reality, we are confined to material choices in a material world, governed by the laws of entropy, with or without free will. If there is a spiritual reality, we have to decide if spirit and matter are separate and conflicting realms, as most religions propose, or harmonious, in which case the laws of physics and the laws of spirit must integrate, and will one day be a post-mathematics of heaven and the soul. And if they integrate, they have presumably always integrated, even before there was time. This, in turn, means that evolution carries a spiritual dimension, which people like Teilhard de Chardin, Sri Aurobindo and Ken Wilber have been saying all along.

So what do you think? Where are we going? Here are 12 possible answers which could start a dinner-party discussion. Send your answer to guydauncey@earthfuture.com, and I'll share the results in a future column.

1. Nowhere. We're just material organisms, driven by selfish genes. There is no inherent direction; it's up to us to make what we want out of life.

2. To heaven. As soon as the conflict in the Middle East has triggered Armageddon, everyone who has accepted

Jesus into their hearts will rise into heaven in the Rapture. Amen.

3. To heaven on Earth, United Church style. Everyone will become kind and loving.

4. Nowhere. We're caught on an endless wheel of suffering, with or without reincarnation. Spiritual enlightenment is the only way out.

5. Into space. Our destiny is out there among the stars. Let us boldly go!

6. To freedom, and the American way. Bring em on! God, democracy, Wal-Mart and Visa will prevail over all unbelievers.

7. To scientific socialism, and the sister/brotherhood of all humanity. Marx, Lenin and Castro were right after all.

8. To ecological collapse. We humans are too powerful a predator species. We are out of balance with nature, and will cause Earth's ecosystems to collapse into disorder.

9. To entropy, and the final collapse of material order. The sun will go supernova, and the universe will experience a heat death. Meanwhile, it's up to us to make what we want out of life.

10. To syntropy. Spirit will continue to evolve as it seeks spiritual, natural, planetary and cosmic harmony.

11. To a super-technological future. All problems will be solved by robots, nanobots, and the crew from Red Dwarf.

12. Nobody knows. And that's the scariest (or most exciting) thought of all.

Guy Dauncey is the author of *Earthfuture: Stories From a Sustainable World* (New Society Publishers, 1999), and other titles and editor of *EcoNews*. He lives in Victoria. www.earthfuture.com



The end of suffering

STILLNESS SPEAKS

by Eckhart Tolle

The interconnectedness of all things: Buddhists have always known it, and physicists now confirm it. Nothing that happens is an isolated event; it only appears to be. The more we judge and label it, the more we isolate it. The wholeness of life becomes fragmented through our thinking. Yet the totality of life has brought this event about. It is part of the web of interconnectedness that is the cosmos.

This means: whatever is could not be otherwise.

In most cases, we cannot begin to understand what role a seemingly senseless event may have within the totality of the cosmos, but recognizing its inevitability within the vastness of the whole can be the beginning of an inner acceptance of what is and thus a realignment with the wholeness of life.

True freedom and the end of suffering is living in such a way as if you had completely chosen whatever you feel or experience at this moment.

This inner alignment with Now is the end of suffering.

Is suffering really necessary? Yes and no.

If you had not suffered as you have, there would be no depth to you as a human being, no humility, no compassion. You would not be reading this now. Suffering cracks open the shell of ego, and then comes a point when it has served its purpose.

Suffering is necessary until you realize it is unnecessary.

Unhappiness needs a mind-made "me" with a story, a conceptual identity. It needs time - past and future. When you remove time from your unhappiness, what is it that remains? The "suchness" of this moment remains.

It may be a feeling of heaviness, agitation, tightness, anger, or even nausea. That is not unhappiness, and it is not a personal problem. There is nothing personal in human pain. It is simply an intense pressure or intense energy that

you feel somewhere in the body. By giving it attention, the feeling doesn't turn into thinking and thus reactivate the unhappy "me."

See what happens when you just allow a feeling to be.

Much suffering, much unhappiness arises when you take each thought that comes into your head for the truth. Situations don't make you unhappy. They may cause you physical pain, but they don't make you unhappy. Your thoughts make you unhappy. Your interpretations, the stories you tell yourself make you unhappy.

"The thoughts I am thinking right now are making me unhappy." This realization breaks your unconscious identification with those thoughts.

What a miserable day.

He didn't have the decency to return my call.

She let me down.

Little stories we tell ourselves and others, often in the form of complaints. They are unconsciously designed to enhance our always deficient sense of self through being "right" and making something or someone "wrong." Being "right" places us in a position of imagined superiority and so strengthens our false sense of

self, the ego. This also creates some kind of enemy: yes, the ego needs enemies to define its boundary, and even the weather can serve that function.

Through habitual mental judgment and emotional contraction, you have a personalized, reactive relationship to people and events in your life. These are all forms of self-created suffering, but they are not recognized as such because to the ego they are satisfying. The ego enhances itself through reactivity and conflict.

How simple life would be without those stories.

It is raining.

He did not call.

I was there. She was not.

When you are suffering, when you are unhappy, stay totally with what is Now. Unhappiness or problems cannot survive in the Now.

Suffering begins when you mentally name or label a situation in some way as undesirable or bad. You resent a situation and that resentment personalizes it and brings in a reactive "me."

Excerpted from *Stillness Speaks*, by Eckhart Tolle, \$17 hardcover. Published by New World Library, toll free 1-800-972-6657 Ext. 52 www.newworldlibrary.com

SPIRITUALITY

continued from page 9

energy and information, Vallee decided "we live in the associative universe of the software scientist rather than the sequential universe of the space-time physicist." Which means our focus on a given idea or emotion may be like performing a cosmic file request.

The library angel and related phenomenon suggest something like a Google-search aspect to existence, or, to use a different metaphor, that the universe occasionally behaves the way an author does with the characters in his or her novel. This brings us back to Michell, and what he concluded from all "the hermetic quality of the universe, the way it will respond to desires implanted in it and reflect back images projected onto it." Michell said that "we are all, individually and collectively, responsible for the world as it really is, which is how we experience it."

"In terms of objective fact there is little to choose between any cosmology, traditional or scientific," he insisted, a claim that is even more radical than the postmodernist deconstruction of truth, and one that I have some problem with myself. But this doesn't have to lead to a nightmare of relativism, because reality construction is a largely a collective act, according to the author. Since we get back what we project, why not believe in the best option? (Paranoia is the belief that the world is out to get you. Pronoia is the suspicion the universe is a conspiracy on your behalf.)

"Evidently therefore it is to our advantage to regard this best of all possible universes, this fascinating organism of which we are part, with the most high-minded expectations in the knowledge that as we imagine this world and our relationship to it, so it will become."

A good argument for believing the universe is friendly rather than unfriendly? You may not be convinced, but then, neither am I (If the reader has doubts, that goes double for this writer). But considering the potential return, I'm willing to go with it, even if Michell's side seems somewhat Pollyanish - the "best of all possible worlds" lampooned by Voltaire in his novel *Candide*. It's also an idea fundamentally alien to the materialism of Western thought. In any case, the straightforward idea that our thoughts have consequences in the world we live in is beyond argument. Whether it's a cantata or a cruise missile, every cultural artifact we humans have conjured into physical existence began as a dream in someone's head.

But how do we jibe Michell's sentiments with declining living standards, species decline, resource wars, and environmental breakdown? It appears *Homo sapiens* is in for a serious ass kicking from an episode of *When Good Biospheres Go Bad*. If conscious intent plays this much a role in the universe we live in, we've apparently been thinking some very bad thoughts for

quite some time.

This brings us to the nature of the world we've created, which some would cite as evidence for an unfriendly universe. But who imagined it into being? From the feudal-era heathen-beating by the Holy Roman Empire to the structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund, westerners have built their lifestyles to an great degree on the suffering of others. The Christian God, the first deity we conquered under, was imagined by believers as alternately beneficent and wrathful. The second god, capital, has its own bipolar disorder.

In the 1920s, German sociologist

distractions. To the "rational materialist" mind, death is the end of everything, and this thought feeds its rage against nature, which has placed it in this position of despair. The destruction of the world is revenge against a vanished God, and a drastic attempt to invoke the spiritual powers."

"Capitalism is probably the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement ... The nature of the religious movement which is capitalism entails the endurance right to the end, to the point where God, too, finally takes on the entire burden of guilt, to the point where the universe has been taken over by that despair which

trial complex that protect their interests. It's not that there are no options - it's that the marginalization of these options fuels a profound despair, along with a growing sense that we have passed beyond the point of no return. Ironically, this despair is likely to feed the addictions, violence, clinical depression, endless distraction, and retail therapy that is already ingrained in North American culture, encouraging further its monstrous consumption of resources and human potential.

This is the true horror of the world we have imagined into being. If children are not nurtured properly in homes where true love prevails, and are raised in a culture endorsing deceit and a Darwinian competition for jobs and resources, a "friendly universe," one they could have otherwise internalized as emotionally real for themselves, may elude them all their lives.

In the so-called First World, we seem to have dug ourselves into a God-sized hole. But the First Law of Holes is to stop digging. If there is some vast consciousness that dreamed this whole shebang into existence, one thing we embody from Him/Her/Whatever is a spark from the fire of creation: the power to choose, to imagine, and to dream new worlds into being.

But remember the quantum experiments I cited earlier, and the lesson from light: often, the way in which we ask a question is inextricably bound to the reality we will be answered with. At the end of her book on remote viewing experimentation, *Multidimensional Mind*, Dr. Jean Millay summed up how consciousness can become an active partner with the world we inhabit. The final sentence of the book is highlighted in script, so the reader recognizes its importance: "Real magic can be created by maintaining a steady focus of intention through an appropriate belief system." Don't believe it?

Consider that a single shlumpy guy in a baseball cap may help swing the next US election, through a documentary that was released domestically against all odds. If Michael Moore's not one person creating magic, I don't know what is.

The universe manifests in many forms, from sunsets to soccer hooligans, seemingly supplying us with abundant reason to decide either which way. The answer we decide, ultimately, is intimately connected to our own deepest level of being. According to the scientific picture of the world, the very chemical elements of our bodies were cooked up in the hearts of supernovae; we have a certain identity with the universe itself. And throughout history, in certain "occult" branches of mainstream religions - Kabala, Sufism, and neoPlatonic traditions - there is the radical idea that our existence is neither accidental nor alienated from its source. In these traditions, the immense variety

continued on page 34



Walter Benjamin recognized the religious dimensions to the worship of money. "It (capitalism) is a religion because it is based on faith - untested and unproven by the individual acolyte - in materialism and rationalism. It is a passive worldview, a negative theology," he wrote. (We can replace the neoMarxist scholar's "capitalism" with "crony corporatism" if we like.)

Although he wasn't directly addressing the topic of belief in a friendly/unfriendly universe, it lies at the heart of his thesis. "Disbelief in any spiritual reality is also a belief system," he noted. "The capitalist mind perceives the world purely in terms of material resources to be used for its benefit, to increase productivity and profit without thought of long-term consequence. If there is still a vague and oppressive sense of guilt, of wrongness and imbalance, this gnawing guilt spurs capitalism on to greater acts of consumption, more violent attempts to subjugate nature, more totalizing efforts to create

is actually its secret hope. Capitalism is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion, which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction. It is the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation."

Decades before the resource wars of the present day, Benjamin insisted "the destruction of the world as the real goal of world capitalism - its systemic hope and transcendent ideal."

That may seem more than a bit extreme, but these musings may have even greater resonance now than they did in Benjamin's time. We seemed to have reached a spiritual brick wall in our secular ways of thinking and feeling. The ads don't deliver, the politics don't heal, and the science doesn't connect. We know all too well the damage that organized religion can do, but we're also beginning to understand the destructiveness of our financial - corporate networks and the military-indus-

SPIRITUALITY



Human perspective evolving

UNIVERSE WITHIN

by Gwen Randall-Young

As a psychologist and author, I frequently find myself reflecting upon the human condition. While doing this recently, I became aware of an ironic Catch 22 which seems ubiquitous in our species. Each individual is unique; millions have gone before us, and millions will follow, yet there never has been, neither will there be another just like us.

At the same time, it seems that most of the tension existing between individuals or groups is based on the belief that others should be more like us. What a formula for monumental frustration. Think of it. What an excellent simulation, an exercise one might find at a corporate retreat on learning to work together and create harmony. Build a planet and populate it with a human species in which no two will ever be the same. Then build in a mindset that has high tolerance for similarities, and a low tolerance for differences.

Imagine a lab experiment where you put dogs, cats and mice all in the same cage. Of course there will be chaos and bloodshed, and the biggest and strongest will be in control. So here we are in the Earthly cage, so often judging others because they are not like us, struggling for power and control, not doing all that much better than the animals in the experiment.

We see this between parents and children, where the parents want the children to be more like them, and vice versa. In adult family relationships, there is often a black sheep who is unaccepted. It happens in the workplace when an individual is "different," even though job performance is satisfactory and of course it happens in communities and on the world stage. There is all the nipping, barking and clawing that we would find if we put different animal species together. However, allegedly, we have higher intelligence than dogs and cats. Surely we can find another way. Perhaps a different perspective is all we need.

How different it would be if we had a reverence for all others. Every single person contains a spark of the divine.

Anything less that we see in them is the sum total of our judgment or interpretation of them. It is those judgments and interpretation that create separation: without them we would be aware of our oneness and feel connected to others. We would work together easily and naturally to solve problems.

It is important to realize that how we define others is nothing more than our definition. How we label an individual or group is a statement about us, not about them. Unfortunately, when we find consensus, others who label the same way we have, we mistakenly assume the label is truth or fact. This can have disastrous consequences,

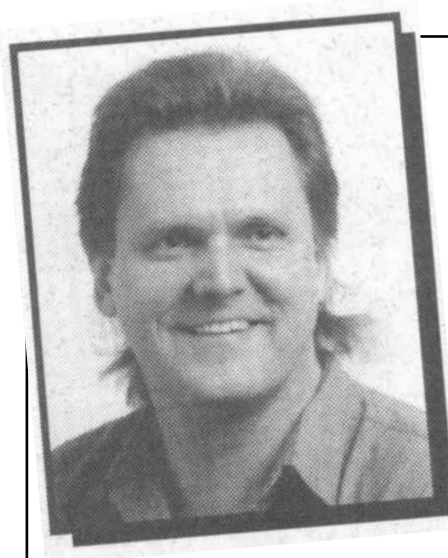
though consensus may blind us to the fact that our interpretation is what is causing the problem. It takes a big step back to really see this, and most often people are so enmeshed in their own interpretation that they cannot

see it. Locked into a "one-interpretation" mode, it is natural to assume, of course, that it is right.

We need to let go of the assumption that our way is right, or better. We are each only one of millions and millions. How could it be that the creator imbued one of us, or one culture, one country, one religion, one tribe, with all of the right answers, and everyone else with the wrong ones? No matter how "right" we think we are, the impossibility of it being that simple in such a complex world, should give us pause.

It is really not about being right, is it? The human experiment is about how well we can get along and understand each other. As long as "we are right and they are wrong," we are still in the cage. When we get that, and when we shift our perception to one of inclusion, only then will we have taken our next evolutionary step.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and chartered psychologist in private practice. Her new book, *Growing Into Soul: The Next Step in Human Evolution* is available through her website, www.gwen.ca/or gwendall@shaw.ca



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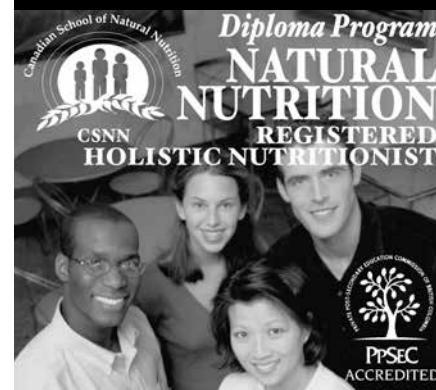
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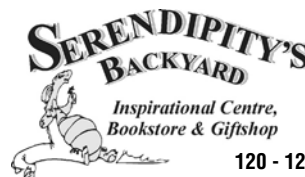
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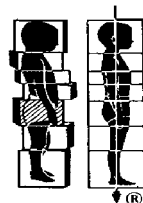
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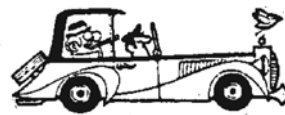
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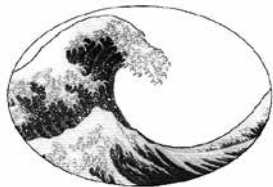
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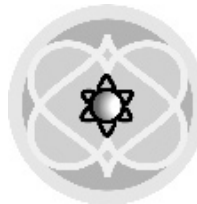
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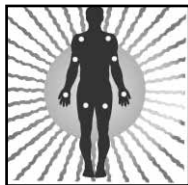
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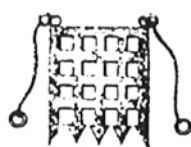
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- Unknown

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Chinese Proverb

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To unlock the door to the future, you must first possess the key to the past.
- Joseph P. Martino



The genetically modified game

THE ORGANIC WAY

by Marya Skrypczajko

It's not easy to be a conscientious grocery consumer in Canada today. Without any laws governing the labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods, Canadians are left to educate themselves about what is and what isn't GE, and then spend time reading all the fine print on the food packaging in grocery stores. Fortunately for us, there are a few basic guidelines to follow and in addition, Greenpeace has published a guidebook to transgenic foods that is available in print or online.

I'll get to those guidelines, but first a little reminder on what GE food is: Any food product that contains at least one ingredient derived from a genetically modified organism (GMO) is GE. GMOs are bred unnaturally by inserting genes from one organism into another, for example fish genes into strawberry plants. This forces the organism to do something it normally would not. According to experts opposed to genetic engineering, the point of this process is only to increase profits for the companies owning the GE products. It's not about solving the world hunger crisis or about reducing the amount of chemical

sprays applied to food when it is grown. In fact, since the genetically modified seeds are produced to be tolerant to the herbicides sold by the same companies that produce the GE seeds, the foods produced from these products have been sprayed by herbicides at least once.

The four big bad ones are corn, soy, cotton and canola. Four doesn't seem like too many, but they are so broadly used in manufactured foods that it is estimated that 70 percent of processed foods in grocery stores are GE. Corn syrup, soy protein, soy lecithin, corn oil, vegetable oil, canola oil and cottonseed oil used in processing of food are generally all GE. The list of foods these ingredients are in is huge and, in no particular order, here's a start: both sugary and healthy-looking cereals, canned beans and pasta sauces, cake and muffin mixes, pre-made pie shells, canned and dried soups, salad dressings, condiments such as mayo, margarine and peanut butter, ice creams, potato chips, soft drinks, baby formulas and pet foods.

I think the most challenging or deceiving one is soy because so many health-conscious people buy soy assuming they

are buying a healthy product. Often times they are healthy because many companies who produce soy products are also committed to not using any GE products. But not all are, so it is important to read the labels on those eco-friendly packages too. Buyer beware.

Most of those red peppers, apples and other fruits and vegetables in perfectly matching rows are not GE. So far, the only exception is GE papayas, which are causing environmental and economic havoc in Hawaii and Thailand. The other fruits and vegetables are bred to look similar, to travel well and to have long shelf lives, but aren't GE, at least not yet. The unfortunate side of this type of breeding though is that taste, nutrition and variety are sacrificed.

How to Avoid GE Food - A Greenpeace Shopper's Guide www.greenpeace.ca/shoppersguide/index.php is a great tool to teach us what products we should avoid. The authors have divided all the products they list into three categories: green, yellow and red. Products that fall into the green column contain no GE ingredients, yellows may contain GE ingredients but the companies listed here have committed to and begun removing all GE ingredients

from their products and red foods are likely to contain GE ingredients. Greenpeace's research was done by its own employees and volunteers, as well as a third party.

Plenty of big name brands people have relied on for years are on the red list and some that even the health-conscious shopper may pick up once in a while such as Haagen-Dazs, Cheerios, Cadbury chocolate and Fruitopia drinks.

Fortunately, there is now such a huge selection of organic foods on the market that we can substitute almost every conventional food with an organic food and be guaranteed minimal genetic contamination. To be certified organic, produce must be grown from seed that is not transgenic, and non-organic pesticides or fertilizers can be used.

The majority of Canadians do not want transgenics in their food and mandatory labeling exists in 35 countries around the world, so let's hope the Canadian government catches on soon.

Marya Skrypczajko is the author of *BC the Organic Way* - Where to Find Organic Food in British Columbia available at bookstores in Canada. For more information, visit www.bctheorganicway.com

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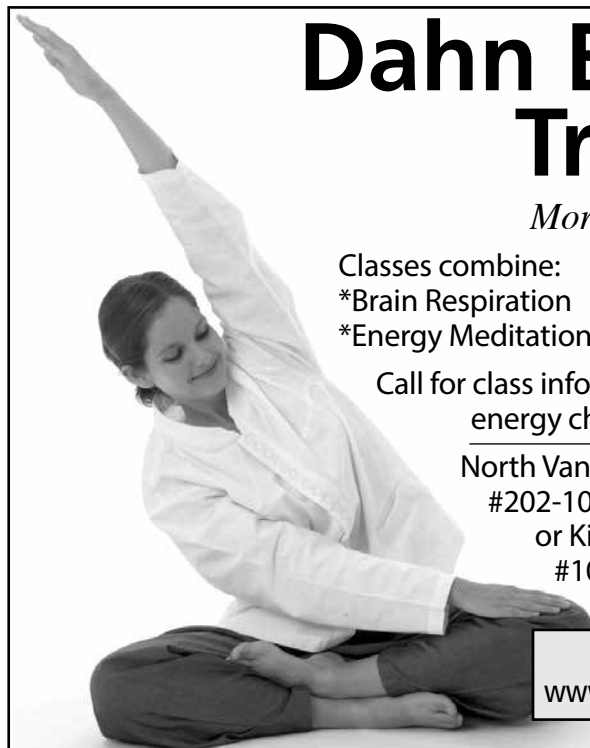
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Food allergy survival

NUTRISPEAK

by Vesanto Melina
MS, RD

"Current thinking is that the lentil is one of nature's most perfect foods. I remember when milk was one of nature's most perfect foods, but that was a long time ago."

— J. Carroll, San Francisco Chronicle

How is it that the staff of life has become public enemy number one for so many people?

Consider how your perceptions of foods have changed during your lifetime. Dairy products or wheat, long viewed as dietary staples, now are shunned by many who experience unwelcome reactions to these items.

Food allergy and intolerance have increased at alarming rates in recent decades. For example, it is estimated that allergies have tripled during the last three decades in developed countries. Dairy products maintain their "essential food group" status on some national food guides, though their tendency to cause gastric distress for so many individuals raises questions about directing people to eat foods that make them ill.

Since 70 percent of the world's population experiences some degree of lactose intolerance; a diet that excludes milk can be considered more normal than one that includes cow's milk for humans. (If you'd like to convey your opinion to Health Canada before the upcoming food guide revision, email healthyeating@hc-sc.gc.ca.)

Many of us find our quality of life to improve immensely when we eliminate one or more of the Big Eight triggers for food sensitivities: dairy, eggs, fish, shellfish, soy, wheat and gluten, peanuts and tree nuts. Why the allergy epidemic? What can we do to make life easier when familiar favourites are banned from our menu? How can we ease the physical or emotional distress of friends and family with food sensitivities? During the past year, I have investigated these and related questions for my newly released Food Allergy Survival Guide.

Food allergies and sensitivities are linked with arthritis, asthma, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), candida, celiac disease, dermatitis, depression, digestive disorders, fatigue, migraines and other conditions.

The medical profession used to dismiss links between these common conditions and diet, yet recent scientific research confirms that for some of us, diet plays a significant role, and dietary change can alleviate symptoms and improve our lives immensely. We are learning about the powerful role played by our intestinal wall,

which is the main interface between the cells of our body and the outside world of foods and beverages.

An important function of this part of the body is to distinguish between wanted and unwanted food particles, and allow entry only to the former. In recent years, scientists have discovered natural ways to improve oral tolerance for foods and to optimize the health and well-being of

our intestinal tract. For some people with food sensitivities, a healthy intestinal wall may be the key to wellness and improved quality of life.

At first, we may view food sensitivities as little more than an unwelcome prohibition against foods that have been lifetime favourites. Yet a possible and unexpected benefit is that sometimes food sensitivities provide inspiration and impetus to improve our diets. Even when we have a sweet treat, it can include nutritious ingredients and be free of the items that trigger unwelcome reactions. Here's an example of a versatile, low-allergy snack that can be made with dried fruit, chopped nuts and carob or chocolate.

If you prefer and can tolerate corn, you may replace 2/3 cup of rice syrup with 1/2 cup of corn syrup, which is both sweeter

and less expensive.

Crispy rice bars
These crunchy squares make a delicious dessert or sweet snack. They contain no wheat, gluten, dairy, soy, yeast, corn, or peanuts; tree nuts are optional.

2/3 cup brown rice syrup
1/4 cup sesame tahini, other seed butter, or almond butter

1/2 teaspoon vanilla flavouring
2 cups crisped rice cereal

Additions (choose one):

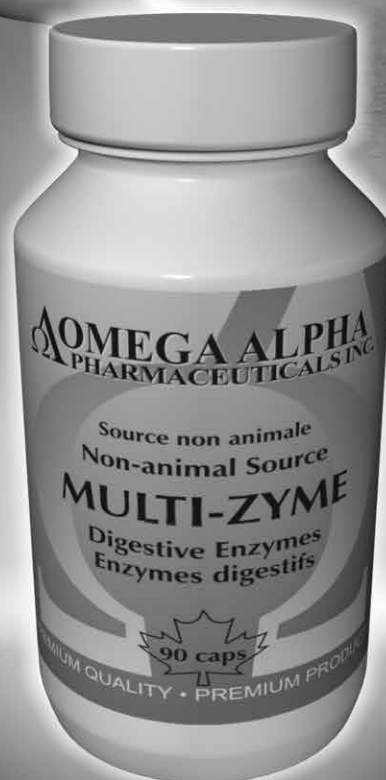
1/2 cup currants, raisins, or finely chopped apricots

1/2 cup lightly roasted chopped almonds or walnuts

1/2 cup non-dairy chocolate or carob chips

Lightly oil an 8-inch square pan. In a continued on page 30

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On Track Zodiac

OCTOBER 2004 by Ilona Hedi Granik



ARIES (March 21 - April 19)

Productively you are at the
top of your game. You can
grab the brass ring in mid air. Better yet,
you can't think in terms of anything but
accomplishment. If you had wings, they
sure would glisten for all to see. Being
positive is your main characteristic, and
one for sharing.



TAURUS (April 20 - May 21)

If you don't like the weather,
imagine how thankful you
will be when the good days come. This
is a time for devotion to all that lifts your
spirit. You may want to let go, kick back
and slow down. This holds power for
you now. Artistically, you soar to new
heights.



GEMINI (May 22 - June 20)

If you see butterflies as merely
moths with colored wings
then perhaps a change towards the posi-
tive is necessary. Find out what makes
you ail and get rid of it. Any course of
action is a perfect recipe until you are
ready to socialize again. Rebuild now and
flourish.



CANCER (June 21 - July 22)

No need to be meek or shy.
You have an opportunity to
not only go after, but also obtain your
ultimate desires. Your thoughts have
wings and they land on welcome ears.
Highly creative times like these are worth
tapping into. Yield to being more divinely
tuned.



LEO (July 23 - August 22)

Time for a survey to discover
your strongest points. Be cre-
ative with the inventory of what you have
and where you want to go. Your vision
is crucial to the outcome. The best first
impression you make marks the day.
Bring your savvy back to the boardroom.



VIRGO (August 23 - Sept 22)

Seek those who want the same
things you do, or you will be
forced to feel like an outsider. All your
hard work and diligence are rewarded
with the proper foundation. Your words
have muscle and follow through. They
are not just empty ideas.



LIBRA (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

How you see yourself may
not be the way you want to
be seen.



SCORPIO (October 23 -
November 21)

Confusion may fill your
mind, but you are gathering wisdom like
a wave gathers shells. You have always
worked with originality at your own pace.
You are going back to the drawing board
to become more informed. Inspiring and
sharpening your tools, this time you carve
a new niche.



SAGITTARIUS (November
22 - December 21)

The Red Sea has parted and
the impossible seems natural. You have
held your tongue and now you can let
all those words fall freely. The things you
didn't say hurt no one. Continue dissolv-
ing illusion with clarity. The truth shall
set you free.



CAPRICORN (December 22
- January 19)

You may have an inclination
to drop everything. The idea that you
may have had the wool pulled over your
eyes now stings with clarity. With a new
awareness, you make strides with confi-
dence. Like a fox, you come out grinning
with inner wisdom.



AQUARIUS (January 20 -
February 19)

Are personal confrontations
overwhelming you? Unconscious pat-
terns have hit the grid of your emotions.
Like comets clashing with each other, you
may need to try something different. Go
with the flow and watch it like fireworks.
Until these occurrences shift, sit back and
laugh like a child.



PISCES (Feb 20 - March 20)

The light within you seems
brightest now. You feel ignited
from within and having the fortitude to
endure. You can further your dreams with
the right cocktail of people and events.
Ongoing pleasures meet with integrity
and abundance. No more tightrope just
the dance.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consul-
tant and author with 29 years of experience
in astrology, multi-media art and healing.
Ilona23@shaw.ca

continued from page 29
small saucepan, place brown rice syrup
and tahini and warm until the mixture
is softened. Remove from heat and stir in
vanilla flavouring.

Combine cereal and addition of your
choice in a large bowl. Pour the warm
mixture over cereal mix and combine
carefully using a wooden spoon. Work
as quickly as possible (this is especially
important if using chocolate or carob
chips so they do not melt). Pack the mix-
ture evenly into prepared pan, pressing
gently with your fingers. Cover the pan
and chill until firm. Slice into squares and
store in an airtight container in the refrig-

erator. These keep for about 10 days (at
least in theory).

Makes 16 squares.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dieti-
tarian, internationally known speaker and
consultant, based near Fort Langley.
She is author of seven books including
the new Food Allergy Survival Guide:
Surviving and Thriving With Food
Allergies and Sensitivities (by Vesanto
Melina, Jo Stepaniak and Dina Aronson,
The Book Publishing Company, 2004.);
Vesanto's website www.nutrispeak.com.
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List at: www.commonground.ca > Advertising > Datebook

OCT DATEBOOK

OCT 1 - 29

The DTES Community Arts Festival and Gallery Gachet present "Surreal City" A new pen and ink series by Artist Bruce Ray Public Reception Oct 8, 7-10pm 604 687-2468

OCT 2

Dru Yoga Workshop. Vancouver Island. Call 250 743 1010

OCT 4 & 18

Loving What Is: Inquiry Circle. Based on the Work of Byron Katie. 7:30pm. #1 - 1718 Marine Dr., West Van. Rosemary Renstad (604) 987-5851 or rrenstad@telus.net

OCT 6 - 20

Wednesdays: Dru Meditation Classes 11.15am - 12.30pm. Dru Yoga 4.00pm - 5.15pm Semperviva Yoga Studio. Call 604 739 2009

OCT 7

Libra Astrological Dinner. Join Host Teresa Wacławik with talk by Astrologer Jason Lazar at Brock House Restaurant. Dinner, door prizes & entertainment. To reserve: 604.732.5538

OCT 8 & 22

Just Dance. Evening of passion and let go. Dance the rhythms of the world. 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month. \$8 smoke & alcohol free. 2114 West 4th www.just-dance.ca

OCT 9

Shamanic Drumming Circle: Journeywork to connect with your dreamtime power animal spirit guardians to understand your soul (heart) longings. Shared wisdom of this land. Newcomers welcome. 7pm. Donation. 604.418.9636. www.shamanichealing.info.

OCT 12

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences 7 week Certificate Evening Course. Intro: \$10. Course: \$295. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818.

OCT 12

Free Core Belief Engineering Orientation. Learn about this powerful, gentle approach to change. Discussion includes personal growth and change options and career direction 7:30 - 9:30pm. (604) 536-7402 Email: eroselle-cbe@msn.com

OCT 14

The Silva Method Presentation Conference: Basic Seminar 7pm UBC Robson Sq Free Intro call 604 925 0816 info@silvamethod-canada.com

OCT 14, 15, 16, 17

Enrich Your Life By Clearing Unhealthy Patterns Formed In Childhood with Transformatonal Facilitator Kelly Tobey. Vancouver Mason Building 1495 W8th Ave, Van. 604-277-9679 mail@kellytobey.com www.kellytobey.com

OCT 14 - 17

Core Belief Engineering Basic Course Learn how to transform limiting core beliefs in this mind-expanding four-day entry-level course in White Rock. Information/registration (604)536-7402

OCT 15-17

Dru Meditation Residential Retreat. Finding the still point in the eye of the hurricane. Paradise Valley. Call 604 922 4067

OCT 16

Yoga Instructor Safety Course, now required for yoga teacher registration with YABC: 4 Saturdays + exam, Langara College \$290, register 604-323-5322, pre-req: 200 hours yoga teacher training, more info 876-3465.

Supreme Master Ching Hai Intl. Assoc. Free Video Seminar, Victoria Central Library 2-4:30. Discover the Inner Light and Inner Sound with the Quan Yin Meditation Method. 250-652-7020

OCT 17

Sound Healing workshop with Yves Vial, from France. Heal yourself and others with the power of the human voice. Victoria, \$60. 250-595-0083, 250-383-6405 yvial@shaw.ca

Clairvoyant Workshop, 1-3:30pm, CDM Psychic Institute, 1114 W Broadway, Suite 201 Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1G5; tel (604) 730-8788

Lotus Light Charity invites you to a sacred Buddhist ceremony for world peace. 950 West 41st Ave @ 1pm; 604-685-5548.

OCT 18 - JAN 10

Coaching With Spirit: Reinventing Your Wheel Redesign your life: 6-workshop series plus private coaching Oct-Jan. \$245+GST. Register: LaRaffinage Spirit Spa, 604.681.9933, info@laraffinage.com, www.laraffinage.com. Visit www.inner-journeyoutfitters.com

OCT 22, 23, 24

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OCT 22-24

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Pamela Lynn 604-505-2249 www.freestyledrumming.com

OCT 24

Psychic Reading Fair, healings also available, 1-5pm, CDM Psychic Institute, 1114 W Broadway, Suite 201 Vancouver, B.C. V6H 1G5; Tel (604) 730-8788

OCT 31

Samhain Ritual & Spiral Dance - Everyone Welcome. Doors Open 6:15pm, Ritual Starts 7:00pm. Maritime Labour Centre



Clayton Carrigan's musical compositions are part of the world premier of *Dancing in the Light*, October 8 & 9 Queen Elizabeth Theatre

Handbook for Bodywork) Victoria, CMTBC credits. \$525. Contacts: Victoria, Audrey Mairi 250/595.6418, www.audreymairi.com Vancouver, Louise MorinCTP 604/688.5838

OCT 23

Dru Yoga Workshop. Bahai Centre, 5880 Main/43rd. 10.30am - 4.00pm. Call 604 876 5153

OCT 23

Freestyle Drumming: Fearless and Feminine "Wild Woman Within!" A fun, exhilarating workshop that's all about celebrating life and togetherness.

-1880 Triumph St. Tickets-\$10-20. Info:604-837-6389

NOV 7

Dru Yoga Workshop. Semperviva Yoga Studio, 12.45pm - 3.45pm. Call 604 739 2009

Living Aloha: An evening of powerful inspiration steeped in ancient Hawaiian tradition, uniting life's spiritual/material elements. \$15+GST. 7pm Register: LaRaffinage Spirit Spa, (604)681-9933, info@laraffinage.com, www.laraffinage.com. Visit www.lynnemccarthy.com.

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Mairi, Trager Tutor. Victoria, CMTBC credits. \$150-350 Contacts: Victoria, Audrey Mairi 250/595.6418, www.audreymairi.com Vancouver, Louise MorinCTP 604/688.5838

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NOV 19 - 21

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FEB 20 - MAR 5

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MAR 6 - 12

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SUNDAYS

The Centre for Spiritual Living Inspired by Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay? You'll love our Sunday services 9:00/11:00 am. Children welcome. 1443 W. 8th Ave., Vancouver, 604-321-1225 www.cslvancouver.com

MONDAYS

Shambhala Buddhism Open House 7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation practice. 8pm refreshments, Buddhist talk and/or video and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

TUESDAYS

Reflexology Student Clinic sessions - only \$15. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604.875.8818

A Course in Miracles drop in study group meets 7:30 pm at 517 East 17th Street, North Vancouver. Call Susan 604 987-6985.

Tuesday Night Healing

Service -7:30pm Opening Prayer-Short Reading -Guided Group Meditation -Laying On of Hands Healing...5584 Kincaid

Street, South Burnaby or view www.firstunitedspirit.ca/hands_on_healing.html

WEDNESDAYS

The Healing Bodywork Centre offers a "Pamper your Partner" evening every last Wednesday of the month. 604.737.8350

Hawaiian Healing Night 7pm. Hawaiian guided Meditation, Sharing the Aloha, and snacks after, meet like minded people and share. \$5.00 donation. At Hale Ola - a place of Healing 1215 Madison ave. Burnaby 604-431-7474 Kaimana and Moanikeala

Shambhala Open House

7pm meditation instruction, sitting meditation. 8pm refreshments, talk and discussion. Free. Shambhala Meditation Centre, 3275 Heather at West 17th.

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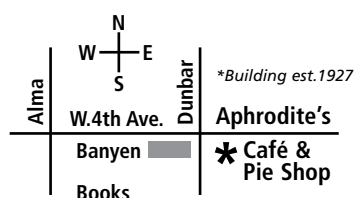
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Practising in a tippy canoe

KAREEN'S YOGA

by Kareen Zebroff

A majestic cathedral of tall trees strive mightily to reach the heavens. Inside, cedar duff on soft peat has become the scented mattress on which our little tent nestles. Through the mosquito-besieged netted roof can be seen the triangle of the luminous star Vega and its eternal partners Debed and Ardair, soon to be followed by a magnitude of twinkling splendour.

Sparks from our crackling beach fire imitate a brilliant meteor shower above, by becoming miniature falling stars themselves - a lovely metaphor for the Hermetic philosophy, "as above, so below." The air is so pure that even the rarely seen red and green light pulsing from all stars has become discernible. Phosphorescence on sand and sea forms glittering auras around each footstep as we dash at midnight into the water and begin to tease strands of brilliant jewels around our arms with each stroke. Magic. Myth. Miracle.

Our merry little band of 14 is attempting a kind of hero's journey by canoe and kayak along Vancouver Island's West Coast. "A hero is someone who has found or done something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience, someone who has given his life to something bigger than oneself," says philosopher Joseph Campbell. "But we needn't risk adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the her path, and where we had thought to find an abomination, we find God. Where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the centre of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world."

And so we shall journey outward by canoe, inward through yoga. What better way to meditate than through the contemplation of the wonders of nature all around us? We close our eyes as I talk us, in a kind of poetic cadence, through a meditation that is meant to evoke again our individual versions of what we had all experienced together in this land of many myths:

"Creator raven, mischievous benefactor of mankind, chattering with his mate just like a human; or berating a rival with swaggering machismo, as she calms him with soothing garbles; sea lions as big as baby whales, hunting and posturing only metres from our gunwales; eagle mothers teaching terrified offspring to rise from swaying boughs and soar without fear; whales singing and leaping, between

faraway islands; powerful fog lady spirit in her canoe, evading sun's mighty efforts to penetrate her secretive mantle; trees frozen into dapper statues, their flowing hair styled by fierce winds in uniform direction; invigorating early-morning swims, surrounded by piney smells; hot, spore-throwing mosses giving off a myriad of spicy scents; eminently familiar, yet unidentifiable; a sensuous blend well-known from childish romps; as intoxicating as the sight of lime-green leaf underbellies, outlined against a cerulean sky; or the somnambulant sounds, of droning summer insects; or the mystery of water being dimpled by little rings that appear hither and fade yon; formed by unseen forces, fish, dragonfly, bubbling gasses, or perhaps our thoughts; as we plow through liquid gold, and part the gentle waves undulating from passing kayaks; to get purchase on pebbled shore and flop against steep rock without stretched arms; breathing hard, as drops shudder off us like rain on a window pane; crucifers for the moment; until we droop in exhaustion onto the redolent soil to rest."

"Wow," exclaims one young wag into the reverent silence, "and I thought I was just camping!" With that, the hitherto solemn group breaks into the kind of laughter that just doesn't want to stop.

"But how can you best do a relaxing yoga pose or two in those tippy canoes?" an older woman asks when silence returns.

"Very carefully," I giggle and the crowd roars again. Oh, how the universe loves that sound.

"Shoulder shrugs, the cow head pose, arm stretches, neck rolls and shrugs, but not much else," I add kindly, remembering how I nearly dumped us two aging amateurs into unfathomable depths, just by turning around suddenly in the bow.

No, much better to practise one's yoga on the beach after a long day of paddling. The chest expander, if neck and shoulder muscles are sore. The tree, the better to feel Mother Nature's restorative powers. The sun salutations, with thanks for a miraculous day. The warrior, to strengthen aching knees. The dog, to ease cramped muscles. Followed, once more, by a cleansing swim.

"Bathing in the sea while the sun is setting strengthens both body and spirit," say the Kwakiutl.

While the Cree pray: "May the water never dry up; may the air never disappear; may the Earth never die; may the sun never diminish; may the mighty, mysterious spirit power never stop to provide us with His blessing."

Kareen Zebroff's classic ABC of Yoga book and video, as well as her Yoga Over 40/50/60 video can be ordered through her website www.kareenzebroff.com

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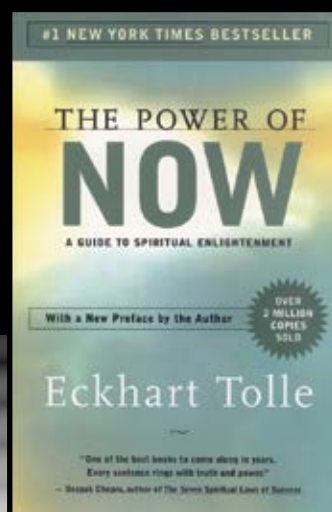


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continued on page 18

of creation is simply an itemized efflorescence of the divine. At bottom, there is no otherness to the foundation of being - although we have the free will to think or believe otherwise.

I suspect our answer to Einstein's question involves nothing less than the universe answering itself, through the agency of the

human heart and mind. Will our decision, yes or no, mean we will receive the kind of subtle verification Michell speaks of? This isn't an experiment for the Royal Society or the National Research Council; it's a subjective test each person must perform on their own.

But it's a tricky question. There is a line from transcendentalists like Walt Whitman

and Emerson to the practitioners of Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People to the "looking out for number one" ethos of self-advancement, which has created a philosophy of winning at all costs. The results are obvious. The problem is that conflating the ego, rather than the self, with a rewarding god or universe has mostly been a recipe

for disaster.

Albert Einstein is not on record as saying the universe is actually friendly or not; he concerned himself with the importance of asking the question. As in the theory of relativity, the position of the observer is fundamental.

Einstein was as much a philosopher as he was a scientist, and he was more interested in the meaningful answer than cold abstractions. His desire for an ultimate unification of knowledge included life, human nature, human intelligence and human personality. As author Charles Hansen pointed out in The Technology of Love, the question Einstein posed was deceptively simple, "but it becomes the most profound of questions, for it has no meaning outside of human observation, of all that humans are, and all that we might become."

The storm that brews on the horizon, the flag that whips in the breeze, the hand outstretched by a stranger, the gaze of a lover; whether we've projected our self into the skies or onto our nation, or through the pupils of a fellow human being, the same question brews for all of us: are you friendly or not? Storms occasionally destroy property, friends sometimes betray us, and government doesn't always have our best interests at heart. But what if you add it all together and ask the universe as a whole? Perhaps the answer depends on the way you put the question.

Geoff Olson is a Vancouver writer and political cartoonist. gefo@telus.net

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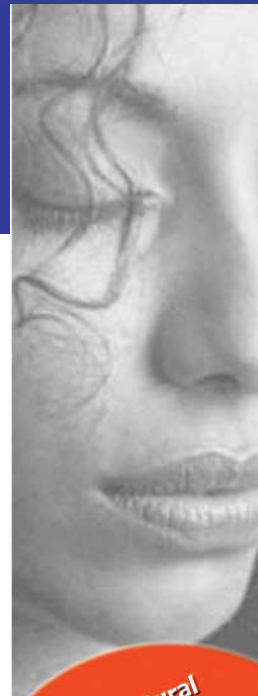
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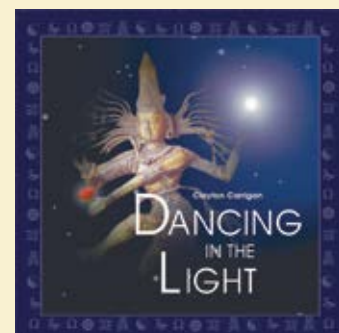
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